

THE
LIBERTINES;

OR,

Monkish Mysteries!

A ROMANCE.

*Sed omnes una manet nox,
Et calcanda semel via letibi.*

HOR.

But see a reverend form arise,
With beck'ning hands and awful eyes;
"Where La Trappe's silent vot'ries weep,
"Or virgins midnight vigils keep,
"The cloister drear, the hallow'd gloom
"Break the dark distance of the tomb,
"Ah! thither, restless rover, flee,
"And there sweet peace shall lodge with thee."—
Vain boast of frantic zeal and sullen care,
Praying, 'mid sighs and groans, or musing in despair.

DYER'S ODES.

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Apr 5, 1932

A. BOWMAN

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THE LIBERTINES, &c.

CHAPTER I.

"Hence motley mirth and wanton song,
That frisk in airy mood along,
Too rapt in blifs to hear a figh!
Hence too, with these,
Self-soothing ease,
That seeft a tear unmov'd, and pafteft filent by!"

DYER'S ODE TO PITY.

ALEXO was carefully instructed by his uncle to revere the catholic religion; and the desire he felt at being witness to the splendid processions of the convents on festivals, gave his uncle great hopes, that he should one day be able to immure him in a monastery, and by that means totally deprive him of all intercourse with the world.—He lavished the highest encomiums on the munificence of the church and its members, expostulated with Alexo upon its riches, and involved in his arguments the certainty of salvation for those who became God's agents for the administration of his blessings on earth. "The poor," said he, "receive alms and comfort from the institution, and the rich, unbounded satisfaction from the pious exhortations of its members. Is it not, then, more consistent with reason, to obey the dictates of

the heart, than sacrifice our reputation and lives at the shrine of intemperance? The midnight riot may command, from the influence of wine, a temporary pleasure; but a comfort of lasting effect is found only by the rational few, that follow the dictates of morality and religion."

This subtle argument produced the desired effect, and the young Alexo was initiated into the convent of St. Dominic, in the prime of life, and the meridian of gaiety and dissipation. Father St. Francis, a man esteemed universally for his benevolence and piety, was chosen the preceptor of our young friar. He exerted every principle of instruction, to instil into his mind the moral obligations of men set apart from society for virtuous dispensations, and the promulgation of religious tenets: he also every evening read him lectures in his cell upon abstinence, and recommended the voluntary penance of the body, to quiet the torments of conscience. After having taught him the necessary lesson of obedience to the worm-eaten relics of different saints, and given him a rigid disgust at fleshly gratifications, he left him to fulfil the necessary functions of his office, as junior friar of the convent.

If the feelings of a man at twenty-one can ever be overcome by the rigid and ridiculous rules of a monastic life, I am sorry to say our young friar, at least, was not so happy as to effect it. He could not

extricate himself from the fetters of nature and an education fitted for the world. He would often lament his solitary situation, and throw his crucifix on the ground in the height of anger and despair.

In his cell was a beautiful painting of the Virgin Mary; but the skill of the artist was lost, and adoration forgotten, when he sighed at midnight for the gay companions of those hours, once devoted to mirth and dissipation.

One evening, as he mused in the solitary walks of the convent garden, he cursed the hour of his initiation, and broke into vehement and loud exclamations upon the frailty of human nature, and the venality of his professional confederates. "Why did I listen," said he, "to the artful, dissembling advice of Rodirego? Why did I so precipitately leave the seat of pleasure and luxury, for this abominable clothing, and the food of superstition?—I will, I am resolved."

At that moment he discovered a friar musing in a walk over-arched with high trees, that led to an hermitage at the bottom of the garden: apprehending he had overheard his exclamations, he retreated through the shrubbery into an adjoining romantic arbour, and there secreted himself amidst the low shrubs that surrounded the spot from the prying eye of curiosity. It was the eve of St. Mark, and the day

had been kept as a public festival and solemn confession by the monks.

He suffered the hour of midnight to approach, before he ventured from his hiding-place; and having smothered his face in his cowl, proceeded hastily to his cell. As he passed through the cloisters that led to the western door of the chapel, he discovered two men in an avenue adjoining, in private conference, and listened attentively to their conversation. They appeared from their gestures to be discussing a subject of momentous consequence.

This determined Alexo to know the result of their conference. He, therefore, managed to get as near them as possible without being detected; and his astonishment was beyond conception when he heard the crime of murder defended by the oldest friar of the two, in the most horrid and sanguinary terms.

“ Murder,” said the monk, “ may be committed with propriety, when the moral character of the perpetrator is hazarded by the existence of the person possessed of a secret, the disclosure of which must inevitably be his ruin.”

A sigh proceeded from the other friar, accompanied with these words:

“ Alas! my brother, how shall we reconcile to our minds the reflection of the many happy hours we have spent in the company of the unhappy and unfortunate Amantha? Oh God! I should never rest

after such an act of horrid and deliberate barbarity. You surely cannot justify such a proceeding. Amantha has not injured us."

"True," exclaimed the grey-headed hypocrite; "but has she not exposed the lady abbess to insult and contempt, her to whom I am devoted by the ties of unbounded affection?—She shall die to-night."

"Hold! hold! Father Jerome," said De Carros; "be not too precipitate: you may repent this temerity. Let us think of some way to dispose of her, less violent and impious than murder."

"Away, then," exclaimed Jerome, "away to your cell, and brood over the childish fears that would keep you from an act commanded by our religion and the laws of self-defence. Hence! hence! and remember, that although you may not assist in the execution of the deed, you will answer for acts of disaffection to our order. The good character you now command in the convent will avail but little; for I will blast it with the force of my authority, and you shall suffer the punishment due to your cowardice."

Here they separated; when Jerome suddenly turned to Paul de Carros, the other monk, and again demanded his presence at the bloody act. He consented, but apparently under the impression of terror and the feelings of guilt. They proceeded with

caution down an avenue in the garden, and passed through a private archway that led into the burying ground of the convent.

Alexo listened with anxiety near the spot for some time, but no sound of any kind was heard. Tired with fruitless watching, he was about to depart, when he heard footsteps approaching. He immediately secreted himself near a ruin, from which he perceived the friars advance, escorting a nun, who was clad in a deep black veil.

His mind was now strongly impressed with the piercing sensation of horror. The moon was sunk into the bosom of a dark cloud, and silence, as in death, reigned in every part of the solitude. And as he followed the friars through the gloomy walks of the garden, the sighs of the unfortunate female only were heard to mingle with the moaning of the night wind, as it swept along the avenues.

After some time they arrived at a private door which led into the chapel, and which was open. The surprise of the friars at this unusual circumstance was beyond expression. They deliberated upon the consequences of entering the sanctuary in the presence of the person whom they supposed was at prayers. It was therefore determined that one should proceed and examine the chapel, whilst the other remained at the outer door.

“ Precious moments!” said Alexo;—
“ why should I hesitate to sell this villain

to the earth, and rescue from certain death this innocent and friendless victim? Will God forgive the act? I have been taught to love him for his goodness—to acknowledge his forgiveness to a repentant sinner.—Why, then, should I doubt of his mercy for a deed of justice?—Yes, he shall die.” And quickening his pace to where the friar stood, he had nearly gained the spot unobserved, when Jerome came from the chapel, and reported to his fellow, that no person was there, and he suspected the porter had unintentionally forgot to lock the door.

Alexo hearing this, contrived to get into the chapel, whilst the friars were busied in satisfying their suspicion, by searching the adjoining avenues and places likely for concealment. The aisles were dark and solitary, which obliged Alexo to be careful in picking his way, lest he should be heard by the friars, who were approaching. He secreted himself behind a tomb, until they had nearly reached the top of the middle aisle; when he perceived them go up to a small altar that stood in a remote niche of the gothic structure, and kneel down before it.

After muttering a few incoherent prayers, they took the female by the arm, and commanded her to kneel before the altar. She obeyed. They then ordered her to kiss her *agnus dei*, and pray for a remission

of her sins, for that in a few minutes she would be no more.

Sighs and tears, accompanied with the most pathetic entreaties, were the consequence of this order. She conjured them by their faith, and love of Almighty God, to spare her; for she was innocent of any crime they had to charge her with.

"Horrid idea!" cried Jerome: "thou knowest that the order would condemn us to the severest punishment, and the lady abbess to death, for violating the sacred laws of the institution, in suffering you to escape punishment merely for requesting it. No, no; thou must—Nay, thou canst not live."

"Remember," said she, "the professions you made when first I devoted my personal influence to your solicitations. Remember, when in religious conversation, how often you have stored my heart with the principle of mercy, and taught me to revere benevolence as the dawn of heaven on the mind! Spare me! Spare me! And whilst you brood over the consequences of a discovery, rely on my innocence for an acquittal. Reflect upon the act you are about to commit—a deed of murder—a crime that never can be pardoned."

Here she took a miniature painting from her bosom, and pressing it to her lips, shed over it a thousand affectionate tears. A clock was indistinctly heard in the distant turret.

"Time passes," exclaimed Jerome, "and morning will appear before we can conceal the body."

He drew the dagger from his belt; and as he raised his arm to plunge it in her bosom, Alexo groaned in the most terrific manner. The friar hesitated.

"Are we not alone?" said Jerome. "I carefully surveyed the chapel, and found it totally free from human beings."

"That noise," replied De Carros, "must proceed from the spirit of some injured and avenging saint, whose name we have so repeatedly profaned, by using it in the prayers we are now on the point of violating, with the most deliberate act of barbarity."

"Idle thought!" exclaimed Jerome: "the disquietudes of the dead arise not from humane regard to the living, but from the souls enduring the pains of purgatory for some atrocious deed committed whilst in existence: the earth hides their bones, and repetition of mass, for the repose of the spirit every evening, surely must be sufficient. These are the dreams of imagination, the visionary effects of superstitious fear:—it was the hollow wind amongst the tombs. We will proceed."

Again Alexo performed the office of a supernatural being, with sighs and groans.

"I am convinced," said Jerome, "some prying fiend has secreted himself in the church. I will examine it. If he be mortal, death shall be the atonement of his curiosi-

ty: if supernatural, it is the business of fools and children only, to be alarmed at a passing shadow."

He advanced so quick to the place of Alexo's concealment, that he had not time to escape, and fell into the friar's hands.

"Ha, villain!" exclaimed Jerome, "art thou the suspected spirit? Dost thou presume to dispense the untimely warnings of the dead? Take the reward of your treachery."

He aimed a blow at Alexo with the dagger, but fortunately it only penetrated the sleeve of his habit. This circumstance allowed Alexo time to recover himself; and seizing the friar by the throat, he threw him on the ground.

During the scuffle, De Carros conveyed the lady from the church to his cell; and on his return he found Alexo had overpowered his antagonist, who was begging for mercy on the ground.

"Take it," cried Alexo: "take that, which thou this moment denied to the unfortunate victim of your cruelty.—Execrable old man! let the future hours of your life be devoted to penitence and contrition."

He hurried to the altar, but perceiving that De Carros had decamped with Amantha, was about to leave the chapel in search of her, when the friar appeared, and demanded the reason of his conduct.

"This church," said the monk, "is a

sanctuary, the house of God, a place consecrated to devotion, and not for a display of our criminal passions in acts of blood."

"Detested hypocrite!" exclaimed Alexo; I will unmask you to the world. The church of Rome is no more than a consecrated asylum for the promoters of vice and murder; but the Holy Inquisition shall reward you."

"Hold!" said De Carros, "rash, intemperate youth! Reflect upon the consequences that must inevitably result from such conduct. The Holy Inquisition is a tribunal of opinion; and regards the order of St. Dominic too much to interfere with its members on the tale of a distempered brain: your folly will be rewarded with an exemplary punishment. Know that Jerome is one of the Secret Council of Reference. I warn you of the danger that threatens you. The punishments are dreadful. Go to your cell, and attend to the duties of your profession, otherwise you will repent it."

Alexo was sensible of nothing but the effects of rage and disappointment, and rushing from the church, fled to his cell, under an anxiety of mind scarce to be described. After prayers in the morning, he retired into the solitudes of the garden, and deliberated on the best means to quit the convent. His own personal safety required such a step; and the desire of bringing to light the conduct of the friars, determined

him to effect his escape from an order, supported by the frauds of religious villains.

“ Is it thus,” he exclaimed, “ that Villany, cloaking itself in the garb of Religion, imposes upon the world? Damned, deceitful mercenaries! The public robber, comparatively, commands respect; his daring spirit of enterprise, and his crimes, are the effect of poverty and distress. But when the ministers of our church, these reputed bulwarks of the catholic faith, perpetrate crimes too sanguinary for a savage,—these creatures of bigotry and indolence are justly execrated and abhorred by mankind.”

His mind was deeply impressed by these reflections; and, retiring to his cell, he wrote a letter to Francis, detailing the circumstances he was witness to in the church, and declared his intention of secretly withdrawing himself from the abbey.

In the evening he quitted the convent under the pretence of administering supreme unction to a dying man in the neighbourhood. Upon the gate closing, he offered up a prayer of thanksgiving for his liberty. He immediately went to the shop of a broker, that he formerly knew, and alleging that he had been at a masquerade, desired that he would wait upon him with a change of dress at a small Inn over the way. The honest trader was soon announced, and the business completed. Being equipped in a plain suit of black, he

went in search of his uncle. He rapped at the door, but was surprised to find his house occupied by an honest pains taking taylor, who had retired from the labours of the needle, and lived upon the fruits of his industry. This man assured him that his uncle was no longer an inhabitant of Madrid; but that from some suspicious circumstance, he knew not what, neither did he pretend to say, Roderigo had quitted the kingdom of Spain for that of Portugal. Struck with astonishment at the taylor's information, he plainly saw the motive that induced Roderigo to seclude him in a monastery. Fixed in a determination to find out the place of his uncle's retreat, and not having the means of satisfying his travelling expences into Portugal, he entered himself as a mule driver to a merchant who was on the point of setting out with a train of attendants for a mart in the province of Estremadura.

Alexo was missed at vespers, and inquiry being made of the porter by Jerome, as to the time of his quitting the convent, and the reason he assigned for it, he was convinced of the fraud, and proclaimed his conduct to the order. He also accused Alexo of an intention to murder him in the sanctuary of the church, which was confirmed by the testimony of De Carros. After a consultation amongst the senior friars, De Carros was dispatched to the In-

quisition with a formal complaint, and an accusation of the pretended crime.

A council was immediately summoned, and an order issued for the apprehending of Alexo. It described his person so accurately, that he could not be mistaken. A paper of this sort was delivered to the host of the inn where Alexo was waiting to accompany the muleteers. It was circulated amongst his companions, who were carousing by the fire. They eagerly looked at the reward, and resolved upon searching for the criminal. Alexo had constantly avoided the company of these men, except when necessity required him to associate with them. He had often been observed in a retired situation, with his arms folded, as in deep reflection: this circumstance gave rise to a suspicion that he was the person described in the hand-bill; and, accordingly, an alguazil was sent for, and at night he was conveyed to the prison of the Inquisition. He was led through a variety of dark, damp, and winding passages, to a cell that was dimly lighted by a lamp suspended from the ceiling by an iron chain. His fare was nothing more than the common allowance of the prison. During the hours of his confinement, his conscience afforded him the required consolation under his misfortunes; and when he reflected upon the advice given him by his preceptor, Father Francis, his heart yielded to the sensibility of nature, and a flood of tears suc-

ceeded the powerful influence of memory. After he had been confined near a week in this dreadful prison, he was ordered to an audience with the Grand Inquisitor, and at midnight the guards conducted him to a chamber hung with black, where he found an old man sitting between two large silver crucifixes, and a secretary at the bottom of a long table. Being seated on a stool, the secretary began the list of accusations; the first was as follows:

FIRST ACCUSATION.

“Don Alexo, a junior friar of the order of St. Dominic, is accused of having violated the laws of the Catholic Church, by entering a sanctuary at the dead of night, with an intent to murder the second Inquisitor of Reference.”

“What sayest thou to this charge?” asked the Inquisitor.

“I deny it,” replied Alexo, in a firm and manly tone. “The circumstances, so directly charged against me, are those that affect Jerome, my private accuser. He is the vilest of dissembling wretches, and deserves the punishment that he is endeavouring to inflict upon me. I beg leave to submit to your Lordship the cause that urged Jerome to commit me to the prison of the Inquisition.”

Alexo then told the whole of the proceedings in the church, the cause of the

quarrel, and concluded with accusing Jerome, in the face of Heaven, of an intent to murder the nun.

Upon hearing his story, the Inquisitor sat for some time musing in his chair, when he ordered him back to his dungeon.

Several days passed with no other comfort than what arose from conscious innocence. Justice, he knew, was banished from the abominable tribunal, as the accused were uniformly convicted upon their own extorted confessions. One night, as he was endeavouring to destroy the reptiles that engendered in his dungeon, and prevented him from resting quietly, he found a board under his bed, that was loose.

He listened.—The footsteps of the centinels, as they paced along the passages, only disturbed the silence of the night. On removing it, and searching with his hands under the floor, he found several sheets of paper carefully pinned together, which were deposited near a linen cloth; that contained the mouldering fragments of a child. He was seized with a cold shivering, on discovering these awful testimonies of cruelty. He returned the cloth, as he had found it, into the hole, and sat down on his bed to peruse the manuscript. It contained the following

HISTORY OF DONNA CLEANTHE.

“ One day, as I was drinking tea with my mother in Madrid, Father Jerome, of

the Dominican convent, entered the room, and joined us in conversation. He was my mother's confessor; for since the precipitate flight of my father from the malice of his enemies, he appeared to deserve our confidence. But, when he retired in the evening, he whispered, as he passed me, in a kind of insidious manner, 'We shall soon meet again.' This somewhat alarmed and surprised me, but I took no notice of it to any person. About midnight there was a loud rap at the door: I started from my bed, and desired the servant to inquire who was there. The answer was,

"The Holy inquisition.

"At these words, my senses forsook me, and I sunk in the arms of my servant: she shrieked, as the repeated raps at the door were followed by the threats of the officers. My mother, alarmed by this disturbance at so late an hour, came into my room, and learning the cause, called from the window for them to depart. A voice, terrific in the extreme, cried out, 'Force the door! force the door!' It was immediately burst open, and four armed ruffians entered my chamber, seized both me and my mother, forced us into a coach, and carried us to the prison of the Inquisition"—

Here he heard the clanking of chains in the passage. He hastily concealed the papers, and expected every moment to be dragged before the Grand Inquisitor; but

the noise soon subsided, and he resumed the narrative.

“ On entering this dreadful prison, my mother was conducted to a dungeon, and I was led to a most splendid apartment. After passing some time alone in the chamber, a female, apparently a domestic of the prison, entered the room, and desired that I would sit down, and take some refreshment. Chocolate was brought by a person in a mask, and she entreated me to taste it. I refused,—and conjured her to tell me the reason of my imprisonment, and how long it was to last. ‘ Bless me!’ she cried; ‘ imprisonment! why, my dear creature, this is a palace, and not a prison. You are in the chambers of Don Jerome, a friar of St. Dominic, and an Inquisitor of great note; he is a man universally beloved, and possessed of unlimited powers.’—— ‘ Don Jerome!’ I repeated, with horrid surprise. ‘ Yes,’ replied Nerissa, ‘ Don Jerome. You know him, then, Madam?’ ‘ O yes!’ I exclaimed, in a torrent of tears, ‘ too well—an abandoned, detestable villain.’ ‘ Hush, hush!’ she cried, ‘ for the sake of Christ and his Virgin Mother, do not speak so loud; if you do, death will certainly be your fate.’—— ‘ Good God!’ I exclaimed, ‘ what do you mean?’

‘ Oh! my dear Madam,’ she whispered, ‘ I will shew you all to-night; but pray do

‘ as you are bid, or certain death will be the consequence.’

“ I obeyed Nerissa’s directions, and remained silent, until the appointed time for an explanation of her mysterious allusion. The long wished for hour of midnight at length arrived, and Nerissa rapped gently at my chamber door. By the light of a small lamp, which she carried in her hand, I followed her in perfect silence through a range of dark galleries, until we arrived at a small iron door. She opened it with a key that she took from her pocket, and we descended a few steps into a room that was hung with black tapestry, descriptive of the punishments in hell, as recorded in fabulous history. She then said, ‘ Here, Madam, are the instruments of torture :’ and holding up the lamp, I discovered a large brass pan over a furnace, on which was this inscription—

‘ THE PUNISHMENT FOR HERETICS,
‘ AND PERSONS DISOBEYING THE
‘ ORDERS OF THE HOLY INQUISITORS.’

‘ In this pan,’ said she, ‘ the poor creatures are locked down, and reduced to ashes by a slow fire.’ We then went into an adjoining room, where an horizontal wheel was placed, covered with large thick boards. She opened a small door at the bottom, and bade me look in ; when I saw that its whole circumference was armed with sharp razor

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blades, tenter hooks, and bits of old saws. —She then led me into another room. ‘ Here,’ said she, ‘ is the worst punishment of all.’ This was a large pit, filled with poisonous reptiles. At the light of the lamp the snakes erected their crests, and hissed aloud, in the most terrific manner. ‘ They cannot be hungry,’ she cried; ‘ for they had an obstinate lady, who would not consent to sleep with our superior, only last night.’ At these words, and surrounded by so many instruments of cruelty, I had fainted, but from the admonitions of Nerissa to support myself until I reached my chamber. As we passed through the gallery, the cries of some unfortunate victim, expiring upon the rack, reached our ears. The clock tolled one, and the clank of heavy chains was heard below. ‘ Quick, quick,’ she cried, ‘ or we shall be discovered.’ —

The noise of footsteps was heard approaching his dungeon, and Alexo again concealed the narrative. The door soon after opened, and a man appeared, who desired Alexo would follow him to the audience chamber. When he arrived there, he was astonished to find Jerome, his implacable enemy, seated as Inquisitor, and De Carros as his secretary at the bottom of the table. He demanded of Alexo why he so daringly added a calumny to a declaration of innocence, founded in falsehood.

“ And is my accuser,” said he, “ to fit

in judgment upon me? Is this the mode of conducting the trial of an unfortunate man, without friends or assistance from the department of the law? I will never, at the hazard of my life, depart from my resolution of not answering any question put to me by the officers of this tribunal."

"Son," replied Jerome, "you may repent such an inconsiderate vow: when you talk of assistance from the department of the law, I beg leave to say, that this most holy institution is not regulated by the law. To suffer a criminal to plead in his defence, would be too tedious, and incompatible with the regular mode of our proceedings."

Alexo then launched out into a strain of violent invective against the Inquisition and all its supporters: he even went so far as to arraign the King at the bar of justice for suffering such hellish tortures to exist.

"Were I in power," he exclaimed, "I would wash away this national calamity, this bloody stain upon the fair records of humanity, this blasphemous cloak of hypocrisy and superstition. Oh God! how long are these enemies to the peace and happiness of mankind to overwhelm the earth with the sacred tears of innocence and virtue? When will the fiery bolts of thy avenging wrath alight upon these grey-headed persecutors?"

"Take him to the rack," cried Jerome, whose eyes and gestures spoke the consum-

mate villany of his heart, " take him to the rack "

" Pass on," replied Alexo, " pass on ; I'll follow you, with the firm reliance that God will revenge my death."

As he was retiring between the guards, a sudden confused noise was heard in the audience chamber ; and, on learning the cause, he found that Jerome had fallen into a violent convulsive fit : his punishment was therefore of necessity deferred, and he was reconducted to his dungeon. After trimming the lamp, and tasting a little water that was in a pitcher on his table, he sat down upon his bed, and concluded the narrative.

" I followed her into my chamber, and throwing myself upon a bed, burst into a flood of tears. Nerissa reproved my despair, and assured me I should come to no harm, if I did not oppose the commands of Don Jerome. It was now near the hour of day-break, and a bell in an adjoining room rang with great violence. At this signal, Nerissa instantly disappeared, and from a small closet in the room, Don Jerome entered, in his slippers and night gown. He fell at my feet, and spoke in the most extravagant terms of love and friendship: he declared his passion for me, with all the ardour of a young and anxious lover, and begged the consummation of his desires that night. —My heart was torn with convulsive and agonizing throbs. Overwhelmed with hor-

ror, I entreated him to abandon so corrupt and wicked a design, and leave me to solitude and tears.—He flattered me, and attempted to caress me—I pushed him from me with disdain; and labouring under the most violent sensations of disgust and horror, I demanded to know the fate of my mother. He told me she was at liberty, but that I was detained for the purposes he before explained to me; and unless I complied with his request, the most dreadful punishments awaited me. I turned from him with looks of horror; but as he was quitting the apartment, apparently with indignation, I flew after him, and endeavoured by my tears and supplications to move him to pity. He looked at me with scornful contempt, and forcing me from him, left me upon the floor in a state of insensibility. When I had in some measure recovered my senses, I rose from the ground, and staggered to a chair near the bed, where I indulged myself with the hope that God would extend his merciful protection to the innocent. To describe the situation of my mind during the night, is impossible; I can only say, that I paced the room in melancholy distress until the approach of midnight: a bell then rang as before; I shuddered until a cold dew overspread every part of me—Nerissa at this moment entered the room—

‘ You must go,’ said she, as she placed

her lamp upon the table, ' immediately to
' his bed.'

' Never!' I exclaimed, maddened with despair.—' Great God of justice, whither
' can I fly for safety? Am I, an unoffending
' victim of oppression, to be sacrificed to
' lust and villany, without thy divine inter-
' position?—Oh, my beloved Bertram! if
' some angel could transport thee here for
' my protection.'——

" Nerissa interrupted me, and entreated me to obey his mandate. I repeated my vows, before a crucifix that stood upon a table in the room.

" As I rose from kneeling at the cross, a tall man entered the chamber. I shrieked aloud, and grasped Nerissa by the arm. He forced us asunder, and wrapping me in his cloak, instantly conveyed me to the chamber of Jerome.

" I was followed by two females, bearing wax lights and baskets of flowers; vases of delicate perfumes were burning in the chamber, and a strain of soft music was instantly succeeded by several voices chanting, as I suppose, an epithalamium. After insulting me with the sacred appellation of bride, they strewed the flowrets upon the carpet, and led me to the bed-side. The curtains drew back, and the monster appeared robed as a suitor: he caught me in his arms, and the females left the apartment. I shrieked aloud for protection.

" At that instant a loud knocking was

heard at the great gate of the prison, lights appeared in the court yard, and soon after the trampling of horses was heard. He rose from his bed, and looked out of the window. He returned apparently engaged in thought. I was instantly ordered back to my room; and on my way thither I enquired of Nerissa the reason for Jerome's conduct.

‘ There is a great lord brought to the Inquisition by the King's guards,’ said she.

“ After a few days had elapsed, I was again conducted to his chamber: he loaded me, by turns, with passionate admiration and inveterate curses; but finding it of no avail to attempt my dishonour by force, he threw me into this dungeon, swearing never to release me until I complied with his desires. Some months after this declaration he sent for me again.” —

[Here the narrative in a different handwriting was concluded.]

“ And still resisting his damnable outrages, he, in the height of madness and revenge, drew a dagger from beneath his pillow, and plunged it in her heart. The body was thrown into the cellar of this prison, to moulder into dust amongst the many victims to his villany and oppression. The bones of the child found with this manuscript belong to Jurgutha, who murdered it privately in this dungeon,”

From the letter N appearing at the bottom of the manuscript, Alexo concluded that Nerissa, the domestic mentioned in the tale, was the person who finished the narrative.

When Alexo had read this affecting story, he wrapped himself in his cloak, and, lying down upon his couch, wept over the sufferings of the unknown but lamented Cleante. After a pause of some minutes he exclaimed,

“ It may be so. It may be suffered, to answer some wise and providential end.— But when we see from day to day these prosperous miscreants of oppression gathering to themselves wealth and power, and fattening upon the superfluous luxuries of the world, whilst the virtuous and friendless part of mankind are the victims of their premeditated plans for debauchery and cruelty, this fact militates against the avowed utility of religion; and the common benefit supposed to be derived from the craft of pulpit declamation, is nothing more than a delusion, to protect them from the suspicions of a discerning age. Oh Jerome! what an example for mankind dost thou afford? what a living instance of that pitch of depravity, which human nature is supposed to be capable of arriving at! What am I to expect from such a blood thirsty villain? Oh, my God! I seem to be deserted by man and thee.” His reflections were disturbed by a gentle rap at the door of

his dungeon; and, as he rose from his couch, it opened, when Father Francis, his aged and beloved preceptor, entered the room. Mutual sorrow for some time prevented them from speaking; at length the old man said,

“ I have overheard you, Alexo, and confess myself astonished that a mind like yours should so soon yield to the unmanly dictates of despair. Oh! my Son, I conjure you as a father, a friend, to hear me.—The Catholic faith”—

“ I abjure it, father!” exclaimed Alexo vehemently, “ I abjure it. The principles of what you call the holy catholic faith are themselves the foundation of our most egregious errors; they infuse into the mind a system of gloomy bigotry, and inculcate the horrid and pernicious doctrine of persecution. I love the sacred laws of religious toleration; they are too nearly allied to all that is dear to man to be violated by catholic hypocrisy, or the fanaticism of any sect that exists upon the face of the earth.”

“ Hush, hush!” said Francis, “ talk not so loudly and violently about the catholic faith. The guards listen at the door, by order, when any friend enters a dungeon to speak to the prisoner. I come to release you from this horrid place, to conduct you to our convent.

“ Father, I am fixed in my determination, never to enter the walls of that detest-

ed sanctuary again. The letter I left upon your table, and this melancholy tale, are my reasons for denying your request."

He gave the manuscript to Francis, and hid his face in his cloak to hide the sorrows of his heart.

When the friar had perused it a little way, his lips were pale; tears gushed from his eyes as he glared round the room, and, when he folded the papers, an involuntary trembling had nearly deprived him of his senses.

"Gracious heaven! said Alexo, what does this mean? You are unwell, father."

He produced his warrant of liberty from the Grand Inquisitor.

"Accompany me home to the convent," said he.

The friar's unaccountable distress struck Alexo with some degree of astonishment, and, anxious to satisfy himself respecting the cause of it, he hastily concealed the cloth containing the bones of the infant under his cloak, and assisted his deliverer, from the gloomy and terrific dungeons of the Inquisition, to the convent of St. Dominic.

CHAPTER II.

" But, Oh ! what form of prayer
 " Can serve my turn ? Forgive me my foul murder !"

HAMLET.

JEROME was conveyed from the audience chamber to his own private apartments in the prison, where he passed the night alone. He was continually agitated by the horrors of reflection, and an irresistible watchfulness seemed to hang upon his senses. About the hour of one a noise, as of some person ascending a staircase, was distinctly heard. He started, and, raising his head gradually from his pillow, heard a voice utter, in a mournful tone—

" Oh, Francis ! Francis ! what a crime hast thou to answer for. Murderer of Catherine !"

" What can this mean ?" he exclaimed.

At that instant a sigh was heard, as from one in deep distress, when the words were again repeated.

He laid in a state of piercing anxiety until the light of day beamed in at the chamber window, when he rose immediately from his bed, and taking the lamp that was yet light upon the table, opened the door of a closet, from whence the voice seemed to proceed, and after a strict search, discovered a trap door, before unknown to him.

He lifted it up, and descended a flight of decayed stone steps into a vault, where he perceived the mouldering relics of human beings, and one in particular that appeared from its state of putrefaction, to have been thrown in but a few days. It was the body of a young beautiful female, and Jerome naturally concluded that it must be the murdered Catherine. Retiring hastily from the vault, he carefully fastened the closet door, and left the prison for his convent. When he reached his cell, he meditated upon the means he had discovered of gratifying his revenge against Francis. His hatred had become implacable; for as soon as Francis received Alexo's letter, he kept a strict watch upon the private steps of Jerome and De Carros, and ordered no person to be seen in the church after a certain hour, upon the pain of expulsion. He also summoned the two friars to a private conference, and insisted on the liberation of Alexo, as the only means of saving them from an accusation. This was complied with. But Jerome alleged, that as the Grand Inquisitor had appointed an audience with Alexo, he would go down himself, lest any thing should happen to him; but he went for the express purpose of torturing Alexo previous to his liberation; his diabolical intention was, however, frustrated.

Jerome attended, as usual, to his professional avocations, and with uplifted eyes

poured forth the cant of hypocrisy to the crucifix. He called on the Holy Virgin to cover him with mortal blessings, and tried to convince her of the purity of his heart, in all the solemnity of sanctimonious prayer. Having concluded his orisons, he set out in search of De Carros, who advised with him upon the immediate disclosure of the circumstance relating to Catherine, as the best and most effectual method of destroying their enemy: but Jerome was guided by his own opinion, and resolved to retain the secret until a favourable opportunity offered to discover it.

“ And where is Amantha ?” he cried.

“ I have conveyed her,” answered De Carros, “ to a dungeon under the chapel of St. Catherine’s, by permission of the abbess.”

“ That is well,” exclaimed Jerome ; “ she is safe, and Francis in our power.”

“ Ah, Jerome !” said De Carros, “ his severity against us will now be punished ; we have him secure ; his death shall be the price of our just revenge.”

When they had concluded their deliberations, they went to communicate to the lady abbess of St. Catherine’s (who was also a determined and inveterate enemy of Francis,) the discovery of the murder, and their intended plan of delivering up Francis to the power of the Inquisition.

They proceeded through the subterraneous passage that led to the monastery,

and gained the cell of Biffare by a private staircase that communicated with the chapel. Upon their explaining the subject of their visit, her joy on the occasion exceeded all bounds. She entered into the conspiracy with rapture, and embraced them in the transports of lascivious delight. "Let us hide that monster in the tomb," said she, "and we need not fear another enemy to our happiness. But where is Amantha, De Carros?"

"In the cell," he replied.

"How long is it since you was there?" said the abbess; "for I have just been, and found the cell empty. I fear she has escaped."

"Escaped!" exclaimed Jerome. "Hell and confusion!"

"Alas!" said the abbess, "I judge only from circumstances; the door of her cell was open, and the lamp gone."

Every avenue, cell, and solitary dungeon was searched in vain. Amantha had fled from the hands of her persecutors, and was no where to be found. This circumstance aided in a great degree to confirm Jerome's opinion, that he was visited by supernatural agents, commissioned to perplex and torment him. He laid strict injunctions on the abbess to give him notice when the retreat of Amantha was discovered, that he might immediately dispatch her, and run no farther risque of a discovery.

Francis and Alexo, after quitting the in-

quisition, soon reached the convent, where they retired together into the father's cell, and Alexo recounted to the friar his sufferings in the prison, and the accidental discovery of the manuscript. On producing the cloth with the bones of the infant, he said,

"It was wrapped in this, father."

"Execrable monster!" exclaimed Francis, "he shall meet the reward of his villany.—'This murderer'——As he uttered this word, big drops stood upon his forehead, and he sunk upon the ground.

Alexo was struck with astonishment. He raised him from the floor, and seated him in a chair. On his recovery, he desired to be by himself.

"You will," said he, "lock up the manuscript and other testimonies, in that small cabinet, that they may be safe, and leave me to myself for a few hours: I am ill, and wish for repose."

Alone and in solitude, Francis deeply reflected upon the enormity of the crime he ordered to be perpetrated, to save his moral character from the justice of an impeachment. The subject of this horrid transaction was a nun, who frequently came to confession at the friar's cell. She was beautiful and engaging in her manners, and attentively pursued the advice of her preceptor in every instance. Secluded from the world, and so often in possession of a treasure desirable and adored, Francis for-

got the duties of his profession, and instigated by a secret and powerful influence of the passions, he continually instilled into the mind of his pupil the exquisite delight of illicit connections, the wisdom and innocence of such proceedings, and usually concluded with a declaration, that nature, admitting it to be under the controul of God, ought not to resist its own creative powers of delight. He was successful in the effect of his deceitful arguments: and one fatal day the lovely and innocent Catherine was seduced by this abandoned man under the cloak of a pious resignation to the will of her Creator. Some time after being called to the superior's chair of the order of St. Dominic, he discovered Catherine was pregnant. Necessity has no law, he was obliged to get rid of her, and in such a way that would keep her friends and the world in ignorance. He therefore resolved, after some deliberation, to send her to the Inquisition, with express orders for her immediate death. This rash determination was instantly put in execution, and the unfortunate and disconsolate parents could only mourn in private over the loss of their unhappy child. An inquiry concerning her fate would have been fatal to them; for the power of Francis was great, and they feared his revenge. Francis read the History of Cleanthe with the feelings of a man labouring under the burning pains of a disturbed conscience. He looked

at the mouldering fragments of the infant with a degree of horror that almost bordered upon madness. He kissed the crucifix, but it had no effect. He prayed for the mercy of his God, but he seemed deserted. He could not reconcile in the moments of deliberate reflection the design of accusing Jerome, from a self conviction of his own impurity. But when he looked upon him as the enemy of Alexo, and his rival in the convent, he determined upon discovering to the world the impious transaction of Jerome. When the night was far advanced he left his cell, and entering the western cloisters, went towards the apartment of Alexo. From a small door that led into a subterraneous passage which communicated with caverns where the dead mouldered into dust, he saw two friars ascend with great caution. On closing the door of the vault, they extinguished the lamp which one of them carried; but as they hurried past the place where he had secreted himself he discovered them to be Jerome and De Carros. When they had disappeared, Francis proceeded to the cell of Alexo, who was asleep on his couch, but he rose immediately he heard his voice at the door to admit him. He was unacquainted with his crimes; but the agitation of his frame, his eyes swollen with tears, his pale and haggard countenance, convinced him that the mind of Francis was the prey of some private misery. He endeavoured in vain

to discover the real cause of his grief; Francis evaded his questions with the most artful suspicion; and frequently referred to different passages in the manuscript, as acts of the most horrid cruelty, purposely to avoid a conversation that did not tend to tranquilize his mind.

Alexo demanded whether he intended to proceed against Jerome?

Francis discovered some symptoms of fear, and said, that he thought he should be able to find out the relations of the deceased, and a public accusation from them would be more effectual, than from him.

“ I am satisfied, father, with this determination,” said Alexo, “ and feel confident that I leave in the hands of a faithful friend, the only means of bringing a villain to punishment. Early to-morrow morning I shall bid a last adieu to this detestable sanctuary, for persecution, debauchery, and murder. I had rather wander through the world in indigence and misery, than become the unprovoked foe of innocence and virtue. Your most holy catholic religion I disclaim; the feelings of my own heart shall be the revealed religion of Alexo. If I never see thee more, father, be careful and preserve the manuscript and fatal relics that I have entrusted to you.”

Early in the morning Alexo quitted the convent, and having been furnished with some money by Francis, strolled about the streets of Madrid, until the hour of dinner

arrived, when he went into an ordinary of some repute. A little time after he was seated, an old gentleman came to the same table; and accosted him in terms of politeness. They entered into conversation, and Alexo soon discovered that he was a country steward to a rich jew in the metropolis. Alexo endeavoured to profit by this hint, and ingratiated himself with the steward. His wishes succeeded, and the old gentleman promised to assist him in procuring for him the place of tutor to the jew's son, who was on the point of setting out on his travels into Portugal.

"This is the very thing," said Alexo; "but when may I expect to hear from you again?"

"To-morrow morning," replied Pedro; "the hour and place of appointment you will find on that card."

He put it into the hand of Alexo, and wished him a good day.

Alexo was punctually at the place appointed; and soon after Pedro arrived.

"I have succeeded," he cried, "in every request beyond my most sanguine expectations; the jew will admit you into his house, and maintain you like a grandee, until his son, whom he expects every day, shall arrive from the university, and then you are to set out for Portugal. But there are many traits in his character, that you must be informed

of; you will pardon my trespassing upon your time and patience by repeating them."

Alexo bowed respectfully.

"I must know then, in the first place, what religion you are of?"

"I cannot tell, for I have no name for mine," replied Alexo.

"So much the better," said Pedro, "for the jew is the most notorious vagabond in that respect, that ever breathed. He is also a jew christian; that is to say, he eats fat pork for his Friday's supper, and calls it forbidden venison; the tribe are afraid it is the forerunner of his becoming a proselyte. In the next place, he keeps an old, ugly, ill-tempered, deformed woman, to dress his victuals, and rub his back with flannel and salt at the fall of the leaf. Never mention the devil in his presence: not that he is frightened at the bugbears of his horns, cloven feet, barbed tail, and flaming pitchfork; but he says very judiciously, that the worst principle in human nature is, endeavouring to make unnecessary enemies; he therefore avoids affronting this mighty potentate; talk to him about that bearded patriarch the wandering jew, and if you try to trace a relationship, you will never want his friendship."

"You may depend," said Alexo, "upon my observing your directions."

"Then," replied Pedro, "we will take a bit of cold fowl, and go immediately to his house."

After he had gorged the major part of a delicate pullet, and swallowed down a pint of most excellent wine, he desired Alexo to pay the bill, and they then set out for the jew's house. Traversing several dirty streets, they at length arrived at a small house in a narrow lane. Pedro rapped at the door; an old woman opened a grate, and on seeing him, exclaimed,

"Odds, my wits, is it you?"

The door was instantly unbarred, and they were ushered into a hall that resembled the common room for prisoners in a county gaol. The spiders were at work in every corner, and three starved cats lay stretched before a small fire. The jew was soon made acquainted with their arrival, and he ordered them up stairs. Alexo was introduced by Pedro to the old gentleman, who was writing at a table in a large folio book, his beard had grown to a formidable length, and his frowns appeared the effect of age. He received Alexo by a nod of his head, but spoke not on any subject, until supper; he then told him to eat, and after he had finished his supper, he might retire. He rang a bell, when the old woman appeared with a lamp, and conducted him into a desolate and gloomy apartment. The old tapestry was fallen into total decay, and the wind whistled through the ruined wainscot

"In shrill and melancholy tones,"—

He examined the bed, but found that the furniture corresponded with the room. His mind was now harassed with unpleasant reflections; he knew that Jerome's malice would assist him in the commission of any crime, and suspected he was betrayed into his hands. He cursed Pedro in his heart, lamented his own imprudent credulity, and expecting he was betrayed into the hands of some unprincipled villain, gave himself up for lost.

As he sat wrapt in the gloom of reflection, he heard a clock in some neighbouring tower strike the hour of midnight, a time usually dreadful to the wanderings of a disturbed imagination; he felt himself inclined to sleep:

"But if I am buried in repose," said he "the villains may dispatch me without trouble."

At this instant he heard people talking rather loud in the adjoining room; he listened attentively to their conversation, and from what he could collect, he found them to be discussing the merits of a robbery, which one of them had committed that night. As he stood in silent astonishment and fear, he perceived a ray of light glimmer through a crevice in one of the dark oak pannels of the wainscot; he lost no time in satisfying his curiosity, and on looking through the aperture, he saw two armed men eagerly watching a monk, who was weighing with great accuracy a quan-

tity of old embossed plate; amongst which he observed several censers, crucifixes, and consecrated candlesticks. A noise as of persons ascending the stairs was heard ere the villain had finished his business.

"Quick," said he to the thieves, "escape into this closet."

They had scarce closed the door, when three ruffians entered the apartment, bearing the body of a well dressed cavalier in their arms. When they laid their masks upon the table, the brutal malice which appeared to envelope their countenances, fully illustrated their characters,

"Sanguinary, cruel, and rapacious."

They nodded assent with their heads when the monk laid his finger on his lips, as a signal for silence; and began stripping the body of the unfortunate stranger, which they soon after conveyed from the room, preceded by the monk who carried a lamp.

Alexo during the remainder of the night experienced the most poignant sensations of horror and distress, and as the hoarse murmurs of the wind mingled with the rattling of the decayed casement, he started with involuntary dread: for anticipating his fate, he heard the sound as a prophetic warning of his murderers' approach.

He had accidentally, when he left his order, brought away with him a book of little poems, which belonged to the con-

vent library : he often lamented the indiscretion, but he now found it an inestimable treasure. He had in his leisure moments marked the most admired pieces in the work, and from one of that number I copy the following

ODE TO MEDITATION.

Oh ! guide me to some moonlight glade,
 To rural ways, or silent shade,
 Where silver streams o'er beds of amber flow ;
 To hear the merry bells, or shepherd's lute,
 That cheer the sylvan scene when all is mute,
 Averting oft the secret powers of woe.
 Attend me, as the setting day
 The western hills with varied light illumines,
 And, on the battlements of ruin near,
 The lonely redbreast sings a farewell lay,
 For then I love to pace the grass-worn way
 Thro' churchyard dim, and midst the mould'ring tombs
 To drop the sacred tribute of a tear.
 But when the funeral hymn is heard to swell
 Along the twilight pathway on the gale,
 Then meet me in some fainted pile,
 Where gloomy horror seems to smile,
 And glim'ring tapers cast a feeble light
 Upon the sculptur'd mansions of the dead—
 Dark seat of silent melancholy.
 Or if I seek yon gloomy spreading yew,
 When death-birds pierce with shrieks the ear of night,
 To weep beside misfortune's cold death-bed,
 O'ergrown with deadly weeds of fable hue,
 Teach me to feel the sorrows that I mourn
 Of those departed ; let the breath of folly
 Taint not the mind with thoughts unholy,
 But, as with inspiration fraught, its powers display,
 Whilst Friendship bends to kiss the hallow'd clay.
 Sublimely when the bosom of the ocean swells,
 And billows onward roll with hideous roar,
 Lashing with idle rage th' impending sleep,

Then let me feel the impulse of thy power,
 In sea-worn cliffs, or hollow winding dells,
 That echo the wild howlings of the deep,
 And the loud groan of misery,
 The sea bird's scream, and lover's frantic cry—
 As sinks the shatter'd bark deep in the foaming tide.

One night, after having watched in vain for the arrival of the monk and his bloody associates, he ventured to lay down upon his couch and try to refresh himself with a few hours repose. He had scarce closed his eyes, when he heard a female with a voice of exquisite melody fingering to a lute. The air was plaintive, and the song expressed the sorrows of misfortune. "Where am I?" he cried, frantic with distress: "to what a place has this execrable villain Pedro transported me? Every night I discover fresh circumstances that convince me, it is the resort of rapine and murder. That lovely stranger, who mourns her fate in such sweet enchanting melody, perchance is the victim of Jerome's cruelty. I would that I could assist her."

In the transports of his passion, he ran to the door and endeavoured to force it open, but the old duenna had carefully and effectually guarded against such an attempt. He sat for some time listening for a repetition of the song, but he heard it no more. In the morning he was summoned by the jew to his chamber. When he appeared, the old man was writing at a table, and a friar in a grey habit was sitting by his side.

On finishing a letter he delivered it to the friar, who left the room. The jew then expatiated largely on the virtue and abilities of his confessor, as he styled him, and proposed that Alexo should apply to him for letters of recommendation to his monastic friends in Portugal; but this Alexo declined, and the jew did not press it. Alexo now was convinced that Pedro had betrayed him into the hands of a villain, and expected nothing but a violent death for his credulity. About an hour before dinner the long looked for son was announced. He was received with apparent affection by the old man, and formally introduced to Alexo. His face was of a malignant rough cast, and his height gigantic. He was booted, and wore a long black cloak, which he threw open without thought when he entered the room, and with the greatest horror Alexo discovered a large sabre suspended from a girdle, in which he carried a brace of pistols and a dagger. A general conversation took place, and the son appeared to know a great deal of the world, but was very ill bred; besides this circumstance, Alexo was surprised to see a student of the university of Salamanca equipped like a robber, or a traveller that was entering a forest in Germany. He soon discovered his principles from the secret signs which by accident he saw pass between him and the jew, who was disconcerted at his coming into the room armed. In the evening Alexo and

his pupil considered the best route to Almeida, the town of their destination, and having fixt upon it, retired to rest. Early in the morning, Gaspardo (for that was his name) held a private conference with the jew, and, as Alexo supposed, received his final instructions ; for about five o'clock the mules were ordered to the door, and the pupil with his tutor set out for the kingdom of Portugal.

CHAPTER III.

" Whence and what art thou, execrable shape,
That dar'st, though grim and horrible, advance
Thy miscreated front athwart my way ?"

MILTON.

IN the convent garden of St. Dominic were groves, fashioned by the ingenuity of man with such peculiar romantic beauty, that no spot, even by nature wild and solitary, could afford a more enchanting resort for those who loved to indulge the powers of contemplation, or the secret pleasures of melancholy in the gloom of solitude.

To one of these sacred walks did Francis retire at midnight, buried in deep reflection. He seated himself beneath the luxuriant branches of a cedar, that grew by the side of a beautiful rivulet, and taking the bones of the infant which Alexo had left with him from his pocket, he surveyed them with a degree of distracting horror, too powerful for description.

"If there are punishments beyond the grave," he exclaimed, "severer than the torments I now endure, to die, is but to plunge deeper in the gulph of misery. What! if I doubt the truth of this opinion?"—

Almost stupified with the excess of grief, the friar rose from his seat, and wandered he knew not whither: as he turned into a solitary walk of towering limes, a form passed him, to all appearance the phantom of Catherine. He stood almost motionless with horror near the spot for a few minutes, when the sound of music floated upon the breeze, and, as it died away, he heard a voice chaunt the following lines:

"Much sorrow, misery, and woe
Attend the wicked. For the deed
Thy tears will never cease to flow,
Thy heart will never cease to bleed;
But you will languish life away,
In anguish, horror, and dismay."

He had read of spirits, and warning voices heard at midnight by villains; and, impressed with the truth of this idea, he precipitately left the garden; for those lonely walks, once his favourite haunt, when philosophy and contemplation broke in upon his hours of rest, now terrified him with their sacred solemnity and silence; and the man, who of late was the idol of his brotherhood, became at once the prey of an insupportable misery, flowing from the horrors of a guilty conscience.

Ere the main bell had ceased, he joined

the monks in the chapel ; but his air and manner bespoke the disorder of his mind. At the conclusion of the service, he retired to his cell, and throwing himself on his couch, endeavoured, by a few hours repose, to lose the remembrance of his crime, and soothe, if possible, the aching of an oppressed and despairing heart.

Scarce had he closed his eyes, when Jerome rapped at his door, and desired to speak with him : he tried to dissemble his distress, and receive the friar's visit without emotion, but in vain ; he was embarrassed, and faltered in his speech. Jerome, suspecting the cause of his confusion and distress to proceed from the severity of reflection, triumphed in his heart over the sorrows of his unfortunate rival.

Whilst Francis, from the manuscript in his possession, looked upon him as a murderer ; Jerome, from the circumstantial evidence of Francis's guilt, charged him in his heart with the most subtle and cruel villainy. Thus were two men professionally set apart to administer consolation to the wretched, and virtuously to promulgate the principles of religion, slaves to the accursed influence of the most dissolute passion, secretly designing each other's destruction, and drenched with the blood of innocence.

It is a common, but judicious observation, that in the retired bosom of a convent the most odious vices are engendered and

brought to maturity. Hypocrisy is the discipline of their schools, and encouraging an universal credulity in the lower class of people for the support of idolatry, the monks become depraved, and the people fools. The principles of speculative theology are also employed to assist their artifice in procuring a superstitious and bigoted reverence for the persons and characters of those who support their delusive dreams of holiness. Seclusion from the world may in some measure guard the heart against the lust of the flesh; but many are so constitutionally formed, that the very idea of a beautiful woman lights up the fire of imagination to such a degree, that it counteracts every system that is formed to subvert the influence of the most tender and endearing of all the passions that lord it over the human mind. If one of these holy pillars of purity and abstinence feels the warmth of love animate his self-presumed frozen sensibility,

“What molten image,” he cries, “can equal the loveliness of woman? for the charms of beauty, what tie resist the feelings of affectionate despair? Oh God! why was I born not to share this enjoyment in common with my fellow-creatures?”

Then it is, that the busy fiends of iniquity assist his hypocritical prudence, and point to the security of his religious solitude, the sacred asylum of his cell, the prayer at midnight; all so convenient for the completion of his purpose, all so well calcu-

lated to shelter him from the raging and justly dreaded torrent of worldly abuse. The crime is common; but his religious character requires him to study an apposite conduct: and when he has rolled in voluptuous ecstasy, until the fiend, disgust, is master of his heart, the world again stares him in the face: it is then that the innocent victim of his lust and hypocrisy is disposed of, by the most sanguinary and barbarous means that lie within the limits of his villany: it is then that he prides himself upon his power, and like the fallen angel of old, triumphs in guilt, rebellious and unholy,

“ Who with ambitious aim
Against the throne and monarchy of God
Raised impious war in heaven, and battle proud,
With vain attempt.” —

In the evening a bell tolled as a signal for the monks of St. Dominic to assemble in the courtyard, and proceed to the priory of St. Catherine's. The gates were thrown open, and they went in solemn procession to the convent; crucifixes, tapers, relics, and devices were profusely distributed amongst the brothers, to excite awe, admiration, and respect in the populace.

In the croud that followed the procession two men, of desperate and ruffianlike appearance, were observed by many of the monks to pay particular attention to Father Francis, continually pushing forward to look at him, and then whispering to

each other, with designing and ambiguous countenances.

As they drew near the gate of the priory, the lady abbess came out to meet them: she was followed by the nuns, chanting a soft requiem for the dead. The sight was grand and affecting, in the extreme. On entering the monastery, the two ruffians that so particularly watched Francis pressed forward, as if to speak to him; but they were prevented from following the procession into the convent yard: in the great square of the building, the abbess accosted him in seeming terms of politeness and respect.

"Indeed, father," said she, "we are unfortunate in not having you for one of our confessors; the piety of Father Jerome, and the consolation we derive from his advice, is, to be sure, a great blessing to us; but with the addition of your religious exertions, our convent would indeed become popular."

"I thank you," replied Francis; and, stepping forward, requested the ceremony they were called upon to perform might begin. It consisted of extemporary prayers by Jerome, and funeral dirges by the whole congregation, in honour of the miraculous disappearance of Jurgutha, a nun belonging to the order, and of whom it was believed that an angel, witnessing her supreme piety, had carried her to heaven in the night.

The symbol of her flight to the realms of peace was consecrated by Jerome with the most ridiculous fervency, and deposited in a sacred chest with the other precious reliëts of ancient superstition. Her cell was ordered to be inhabited by sister Melissa, and to be held sacred, so that no footsteps but Melissa's ever after entered the apartment.

During the ceremony, Francis continued in deep reflection; for his thoughts were occupied too much with the mysterious adventure in the solitudes of the garden, to attend to the exhortations of Jerome: but when the requiem for the dead was sung, he felt a sudden coldness steal over him, his heart throbbed, as if bursting in his bosom, and a flood of tears poured down his haggard and emaciated countenance.

When the ceremony was concluded, the monks returned in procession to the convent, but Francis secretly stole into the cemetery of St. Catharine's, and wandered amongst the tombs.

He had not been long in this situation, before he heard the same voice that the night before had astonished him in the solitude. He looked around, but the darkness prevented him from discovering the unknown. After a pause of some minutes, music stole upon the silence of the night. Hastily quitting the cemetery, he followed

the found to the western aisle of the chapel, where he discovered a nun seated in a melancholy posture at the foot of a small monument, which he knew was a cenotaph: her hair hung wildly over her shoulders, and a chaplet of chrystal beads suspended from her neck a large and beautiful cross of amber.

From a motive of sincere pity that glowed in his bosom, he was desirous to learn the cause that induced the nun to visit at midnight a tomb which did not contain the ashes of the departed, but was merely erected in honour of the dead. He approached the spot whilst the unfortunate was indulging her sorrows with her face buried in her bosom.

“ Daughter,” said he, in an affectionate tone, “ if a holy brother of St. Dominic can restore comfort to thy heart, and relieve by his admonitions” —

At this instant she raised her veil slowly from her face, and surveying the monk with a dejected and despairing countenance, pointed to the monument, and fled along the aisle, uttering disconsolate and piercing shrieks. He took the lamp she had left upon the ground, and surveyed the tomb. No language can express his horror, his confusion, his distress, when he read the following words :

"To the memory of
CATHERINE,
Daughter of **DON JUAN DE CASTILAS,**
who was hurried, in the meridian of youth and beauty,
to the grave,
Her disconsolate friends have erected
this monumental tablet, to perpetuate the memory of a
beloved and only child.
Peace be with her spirit !"

"Amen," cried the terrified monk,
"amen."

He dropt the lamp upon the ground,
and fled immediately from the chapel into
the cloisters, from whence he gained the
street unobserved.

The night was very dark ; and as he hurried to his convent, he was met by the two men that followed him to the gates of the nunnery, with such suspicious and inquiring conduct.

"We request," said one, "your assistance, father, to hear the confessions of a sinner, who lies at the point of death."

The mind of Francis was unequal to the task of administering consolation to the wicked ; but considering himself bound by his religious vows to assist the distressed in prayer, he put several questions to them concerning their request ; and having satisfied himself respecting the truth of it, consented to go with them. They led him into a remote part of the city to a small cottage, and one of them taking a key from his pocket, opened the door, and conducted

Francis to the bed side of the penitent. Being left alone in the sick man's room, he drew back the curtains, and discovered a pale, emaciated figure sitting upright in the bed. The man conjured the friar to use his religious power to the utmost limit, to procure him a remission of sins, and discovered to the priest a train of the most atrocious villanies that ever man committed. He concluded his history in the following words:

“ But the crime, father, that hangs the heaviest upon my conscience, is a murder. I have told you that I was a torturer to the Most Holy Inquisition: and one night a lady of exquisite beauty was brought to me by a friar in a mask, who delivered me an order to dispatch her privately, and left in my possession a large bag of gold as a reward for my trouble. Oh! my father, how shall I describe to you her piercing entreaties to live?

‘ For the sake of God, consider,’ she cried, ‘ the infant I bear in my bosom.’

“ I burst into tears, and unable to perpetrate the deed myself, conveyed her to the convent of St. Catherine's, and gave the abbess a part of the reward, to confine her in a dungeon, and starve her to death.”—

“ Sinner,” said the friar, “ what was the name of this unfortunate lady?”

“ She told me that she was the daughter of Don Juan de Castillas, a wealthy gen-

tleman, who lived not far from the convent of St. Dominic: this is her picture, father."

He seized it, and cried out in the most violent agitation of mind,

"You are her murderer, then?"

The villain uttered a loud shriek, and pointed to the foot of the bed.

"It is there!" he cried, "it is there! See how the spectre glares at me! It holds a bloody dagger in its fleshless hand: it approaches.—Oh God!—Save me, father, save me."

The wretch grasped the trembling and almost senseless friar by the arm.

"Exert yourself, or I shall be plunged into the deepest pit of hell: look at it; speak to it; protect me."

He fainted upon his pillow.—Francis instantly rushed from the room, and left the villain in the agonies of death, without administering to him the ideal comfort of absolution.

When the monk reached his cell, the powers of language are not sufficient to describe his situation. He paced the room up and down, in a state of wild distraction; he pressed the picture to his lips and kissed it repeatedly, in a delirium of affectionate remorse and sorrow.

"Behold, villain," he cried, "the expressive beauty of that face! lips that would have administered to the heart the celestial ecstasies of love united with sincerity: eyes that languished with desire, but at the same

time possessing power to awe the vilest advocate of immorality to respect; they seem to turn with horror from a wretch that barbarously butchered innocence. Oh Catherine! Catherine! I would that I could raise thee from the dead; for it was my villany that prepared for thee an early and untimely grave. Oh! that I had died in infancy. I cannot live to be the prey of sorrow and reflection; I can no longer suffer these unceasing pangs of guilt: this world to me is as a wild to the bewildered traveller, when the dreaded darkness of the night, spreads over the heavens, and leaves him to misery and tears. Oh my God! how weak are the bonds of reason, how frail the judgment of man, when the momentary sweets of dissipation can tear them asunder, and blast his happiness for ever!"

He had neglected in his distress to fasten the door of his cell; and with incredible surprise he observed it open, and his implacable enemy, Jerome, enter the apartment.

"Father," said he, "I had retired to rest; but brother Anselem, who devotes his time to philosophical pursuits, and who prefers the night for study and contemplation, overheard your exclamations, and pitying your distresses, immediately called me from my bed, to render you assistance and comfort: by this time the monks are assembled in the refectory, probably waiting with anxiety for my return, to know

the result of my visit. Disclose to me, father," he continued with a smile of affected compassion, "the sufferings of your heart; look upon me as your friend, your brother."

"In iniquity I do," replied Francis, haughtily.

"Beware," exclaimed Jerome, "how you wantonly insult me, or belie my character. Contempt begets hatred. I could unfold a tale, Francis, that would soften the most obdurate heart to pity, and stimulate the most inactive mind to indignation and revenge. If you had loved Catherine!"—

The friar started from his place, and caught Jerome by the arm.—

"Speak on, load me with reproaches, curse me and despise me, for I do acknowledge myself to be a villain; but first respect the memory of Cleanthe."

It is impossible to describe the sensations of Jerome, when Francis discovered to him that he was in possession of a secret, on which his life depended; he stood for some minutes as one struck senseless by the lightning of heaven.

"Go," said Francis, as the tears flowed down his cheeks, "go, and be at peace; we probably may never meet again."

When Jerome had quitted his cell, Francis prayed with devout contrition during those intervals when despair left him to the torments of reflection. Early in the morning he wandered alone in the avenues of the

garden; and as he passed a bed of poisonous plants, which he had cultivated for chemical experiments, the dreadful alternative of suicide struck him, as the only method to save him from a public trial and the horrors of a violent death by the hands of the executioners. He accordingly gathered a quantity of those fatal flowers, and distilling from them the baneful juice, infused it into his drink, and swallowed it the following night, previously commending his soul to the mercy of God.

When the poison began to operate, his senses forsook him, and he raved violently, cursing the hour of his birth, repeating the name of Catherine, and continually imploring the mediation of his Saviour with God for his salvation.

The brotherhood, alarmed at the noise, ran to his cell, but too late to relieve him. They administered medicines, but in vain; he continued in a state of distraction until noon, when the agonies of death seized him, and he expired, a most deplorable and melancholy spectacle.

Thus died a man, who, from the natural benevolence of his disposition and the goodness of his heart, might, from an intercourse with mankind, have been happy and beloved; but buried in the solitude of a convent, and deprived of all the habits that connect themselves with the necessary and social comforts of life, he on the first dawning of a brutal passion became its slave, and

yielding to its fatal influence, lived the prey of wretchedness and horror, until the miseries of his conscience compelled him to insult his God, by precipitating his guilty soul into his divine presence—

“Without one prayer, repentant to avert

“The just and dreaded punishments of hell.”

A secret and malignant triumph spread upon the countenance of Jerome, when he beheld the unhappy Francis stretched upon his couch a lifeless corpse. As he stood by the body he discovered the picture of Catherine, and snatching it hastily from the bosom of Francis, examined it with profound attention, and then concealed it in his pocket. Jerome and De Carros the first opportunity searched the cell of Francis with the strictest attention. They found in it the manuscript with the bones of the infant. Jerome instantly destroyed the manuscript, and wrapping the bones and cloth in an old napkin, he consigned them at midnight to the earth, enjoining at the same time De Carros to profound secrecy.

CHAPTER IV.

" But not alike to every mortal eye
 Is this great scene unveiled ; for since the claims
 Of social life to different labours urge
 The active powers of man, with wise intent
 The hand of nature on peculiar minds
 Imprints a different bias, and to each
 Decrees its province in the common toil."

AKENSIDE.

ALEXO and his pupil had not travelled far, before Gaspardo sunk into a gloomy state of reflection. Alexo endeavoured to divert his mind from meditation, but to no purpose ; his raillery and pleasant jokes were lost. At last he spoke—

" Alexo," said he, " I esteem you as a friend, and would willingly obey the directions of the jew, but my feelings are too powerful for the base ties of false honour. I claim no kindred with that fellow ; he is not my father, nor one of the Hebrew tribe, but a man of the most despicable character. He traffics with robbers and murderers, and encourages them to commit the most inhuman crimes for the sole purpose of enriching himself by sharing the spoil. You know him well, Alexo ; he is no other person than Father Jerome, a monk of St. Dominic's order. Now hear what a villain he is. You recollect the man who stiled himself Pedro?"

" Yes," answered Alexo, " I do."

"Then," replied Gaspardo, "you have seen one of the most hardened and bloody knaves in all Spain. His intimacy with you was the effect of design; for as soon as you quitted the convent, Jerome employed that fellow to entrap you, and that house was to have been the place of murder, and myself the perpetrator. Pedro hired me himself, through the means of a man who resides in the province of Old Castile: but I thought well of you, and persuaded Jerome to let me take you from the house, and dispatch you in a forest at no great distance. This contrivance was only to reveal the plot to you, and save your life."

During this extraordinary speech, Alexo continued in a state of dreadful surprise; and turning to Gaspardo, thanked him on his knees for the preservation of his life.

"I hope one day," said he, "to be revenged upon my enemy."

"Revenge!" cried Gaspardo, flourishing a pistol in the air, and his eyes sparkling with delight. "Bravo! The sooner it is satisfied, the better appetite for the deed. Let it be to-night. To-night let us return to Madrid, and shoot the old beldam through the head; we shall then have no impediment in our way: there is plenty of ill-gotten wealth, I warrant, to reward us for our trouble."

Alexo hesitated, and made some objection to undertake so violent a proceeding.

"It may endanger our lives," he replied.

"Not in the least," said Gaspardo. "I know the house is inhabited by the old woman only, and its retired situation precludes us from the possibility of an attack from passengers."

He stopt, and looking stedfastly at Alexo, exclaimed,

"Why do you hesitate? If a share in the abundant riches we shall find in the house will not tempt you, the alternative is this," putting one of his pistols to his head; "for I am resolved upon the deed."

"Hold!" cried Alexo; "I consent."

They turned back, and loitered about the metropolis until the approach of midnight, when they went by a private way to the house of the pretended jew. They rapped at the door, and for some time no one appeared. At last the old woman opened the little grate, and inquired who was there, and what they wanted.

"We are returned," said Alexo, "in consequence of an accident that has happened to the jew's son: a fall from the mule renders him incapable of sitting on the animal; and, unless medical assistance is procured, his death will be the certain consequence."

"Lack-a-day," she cried, "what is to be done? here is no one but myself in the house, and I am old and lame."

“Open the door,” said Alexo, “and let us in; for the night air is very cold.”

The bolts gradually drew back, and immediately the door opened, Gaspardo rushed forward, and stabbed the old duenna to the heart. Without making any noise, and by the moon-light that beamed through the lattice into the passage, they raised the body from the ground, and conveying it into the garden, buried it in the most unfrequented part of a thick shrubbery.—Gaspardo then hurried to the house, and led Alexo through a long gallery to the room where he had seen the monk weighing the silver, and bartering with the thieves. They forced open a small door in the wall, where Gaspardo said a valuable chest was deposited; and as they were busily employed in searching for the booty, the tone of a lute was faintly heard, accompanied by a female voice.

“What is that?” cried Gaspardo, as he started from the spot.

Alexo replied, that he had once heard the sound of music, accompanied, as he supposed, by the same voice, and about the same hour of the night.

After a pause of some minutes the air was repeated. By following the sound of the lute they discovered the rooms in which the unfortunate sorrower was confined; and after much trouble succeeded in forcing open the door. When they entered the

apartment, a lady of an elegant figure, apparently worn out with distress, rose from a couch, and addressed them—

“ I have long anticipated your business, and I am ready. Death is the only refuge from the piercing calamities I now labour under, and I meet it as the minister of future happiness.”

She drew a picture from her bosom, and kissed it with affectionate transports.

At this instant a clock in some neighbouring church struck one.

“ We are your friends,” cried Gaspardo, “ but it is past midnight, and we must travel many miles before day-break. If you will follow us, we will conduct you to a place of security.”

“ Gracious God !” she exclaimed, “ am I to look upon you as my deliverers from captivity ?”

“ Waste no time,” said Gaspardo, “ in exclamations of gratitude : our business is with the concealed treasures of your gaoler ; take the lamp and follow us.”

They stationed the lady at the top of the stairs, whilst they descended into a vault, the floor of which was strewn with the mouldering bones and skulls of human beings, to warn them if any one entered the house during their search ; for the many private ways that communicated with the prison of the Inquisition fully justified the prudence of such a step.

“ Perchance,” said Alexo, as he passed

over the scattered ashes of the dead, "this is the unfortunate Cleanthe's tomb."

"Come along," cried Gaspardo, as he trimmed a torch which he carried, by thrusting it against the damp and rugged walls of the cavern, "come along, our time is short, and we must not idle it away in reflection."

They went to work, and soon discovered a large chest filled with valuables, which they plundered.

"Another such as this, and I should set off contented," cried Gaspardo; "but we cannot stay any longer; the monks of St. Dominic will be stirring, and my professional brethren quitting their stations on the forest roads for their haunts in the city," said

He had scarce finished his speech, when Alexo perceived the lady hastily descending the stairs.

"We are betrayed," he cried.

"How," exclaimed Gaspardo, "betrayed!"

By this time the lady had got within hearing.

"You are discovered," she uttered, with a countenance expressive of horror: there is a fellow in the house, calling aloud for the old housekeeper. I saw him pass through the gallery, as I stood in the passage."

Gaspardo, without saying a word, extinguished the lights, and precipitately left the cavern.

After some time had elapsed, Alexo saw him descending the stairs, accompanied by a man whom he knew from his voice and stature to be the villain Pedro.

"Merciful God!" he exclaimed, "they are coming to murder us."

The lady grasped him by the hand.

"Let us secrete ourselves," she cried, "in one of the recesses that surround this horrid dungeon; perchance we may discover some outlet that will enable us to escape their designs."

At that moment the light suddenly disappeared, and they were again left in total darkness.

"Now," said Alexo, "let us fly from this scene of blood: the time is precious."

They hastened along the gloomy vault, and had nearly gained the stairs, when Gaspardo appeared with the lamp at the extremity of the cavern.

"Hift! hift!" he cried, as he approached, "all is safe, all is safe: where are you going? Surely you would not leave me alone in this horrible place. What! you thought, I suppose, that Pedro was coming to pay you a visit. He is a sad dog; but I have sent him away very well satisfied: still that is no reason but that he may return with assistance, and secure us; for I have had several examples of his treachery. Follow me, and let us begone while we are at liberty."

After traversing a long narrow passage,

they ascended a winding staircase, which led into a small romantic tower, that was situated in a secluded part of the garden.

"So far, so good," said Gaspardo, as he threw the lamp upon the ground. "We have now only to mount our mules, and gain the high road to Castile, to be out of the power of Pedro and his hoary confederates in iniquity. Come, my lady, give me leave to assist you to seat yourself behind Alexo; I am not accustomed to gallant the sex, but I suspect myself to be possessed of the feelings of a man, and his first duty is that of attention to the female part of society. I have a wench at home, that will prove good company, I warrant; or she is not what I take her for."

He then assisted the lady to seat herself on the mule behind Alexo, and, mounting his own, left the metropolis by a private and unfrequented road, as he said, for his cottage in old Castile.

They rode furiously along, until the morning broke over the blue summits of the mountains before them, when the songs of muleteers and the tinkling of bells were heard upon the distant plains.

"It is now time to alter our course," cried Gaspardo, as he struck into a small winding pathway of a thick wood, by the road side, through which they continued their journey until late in the day, when they arrived at a hut situated in a solitary valley at the foot of a barren and stupen-

dous mountain. The only person that appeared to inhabit this lonely dwelling was an arch boy, expert at any thing but honestly. He took good care of the mules, and supplied the travellers with excellent refreshment. As the evening approached, they left the hovel, and continued their route until the third day, passing along the most unfrequented and intricate paths, and stopping frequently at small huts in their road for food,) when they discovered a cottage, surrounded by a clump of tall trees, in a retired part of a forest.

Gaspardo alighted from his mule, and rapped at the door. It was immediately opened by a young woman, who saluted him with

“ You are welcome home, my love. And if you knew how I have been plagued to know where you”——

Gaspardo knitted his brows, and laying his pistols upon the table,

“ Rose,” said he, rather pettishly, “ these are two friends of mine; they have travelled a long journey without murmuring, and you must make them merry and welcome with our homely fare—I am a gentleman by birth, my lady, but reduced by necessity to fell wood in this forest for the support of myself and family, I cannot treat you with dainties; but the best my storehouse affords shall be set before you ”

He immediately procured with the assistance of Rose, some refreshment, consist-

ing of bread, cheese, fruit, and excellent wine.

When the sun was set, Gaspardo suddenly disappeared, and left the travellers with his wife. Alexo endeavoured by artful interrogation to gain some information respecting Gaspardo, and the employment he followed in so solitary a residence, but to no purpose: she was extremely reserved, and her answers to all his questions, altho' ambiguous, were guarded with expressions that fully supported the honesty of her husband. To rid herself of the conversation, she expressed a wish to know how Gaspardo came acquainted with them, and who they were; and this circumstance drew from the lady the following narrative:

HISTORY OF DONNA CLARINDA.

" I am the descendant of a noble family in Madrid, and was married at an early age to Don Alphonso de Berinda, whose family disapproving of our union, condemned us to live in obscurity, upon a scanty income, in a small house near the metropolis. We continued in this situation for some years; during which period I was mother to a son and daughter. We brought them both up in the faith of the most holy catholic religion: I carefully instructed my daughter in the most useful branches of female education; and the boy, under the tuition of his father, excelled in all the manly exercises he taught him. He instilled into his mind

the love of hardship, and the desire of acquiring fame and respect by courage and honourable actions. In the meridian of our happiness the minister of state received information that a conspiracy was forming against the government. He employed the most despicable artifices, to involve every person in trouble that he disliked. Informers, under the mask of friendship, entered the families of the innocent, and bribing their servants with large sums, caused them, upon the evidence of such sorry scoundrels, to be apprehended, and committed to the care of gaolers and other imperious officers of the crown. It was the fate of Don Alphonso to be suspected, from his singular mode of living. He was warned of the consequences that must inevitably result from his continuing near the metropolis, and advised to leave the country: he hesitated; but the horrid idea of the Inquisition surmounted all sensibility; and hearing that his house was beset by the officers of injustice, he consulted his safety by a precipitate retreat in the middle of the night. My sensations at this melancholy event can better be conceived than described. He was accompanied only by his son, who affectionately insisted to share his father's misfortunes: to me he denied that felicity, expressing his hopes that the reign of a Spanish Nero would not be long, and then he could return to me in safety. Some time elapsed before I heard from him, and then

his letter did not discover the place of his retreat. But this solitary pleasure was soon denied me; for the state, proceeding upon the most dishonourable and unprincipled plan, privately opened the letters that appeared suspicious, and condemned what they found, as if coming from conspirators, to the flames. A proclamation was also issued, describing the persons of the fugitives, with a large reward for their apprehension, dead or alive, and denouncing a confiscation of their property. Our little all was accordingly embezzled by these state counsellors. At this afflicting period, a friar of the order of St. Dominic interfered, and caused part of our property to be restored. Our gratitude on this occasion was beyond bounds; we loaded him with blessings and thankful acknowledgments for his disinterested generosity. His frequent visits to our melancholy retirement were received with those expressions of approbation and friendship, which our obligations to him required; and thinking myself highly honoured by his acquaintance, I readily granted him his request of becoming my confessor. My spirits were continually depressed; and altho' my daughter strove by tears and entreaties to dissuade me from despondency, I gave myself up a prey to grief and despair. Father Jerome (for that was his name) conjured me to reflect upon the distressing situation I should place my

daughter in, if I continued to add to my afflictions by indulging in melancholy.

‘She will be left,’ said he, ‘without a friend, in a dissolute and abandoned world.’

“His words roused me to a sense of my maternal duty, and the gloom that hung upon my mind was dispelled by his advice; and no other thought but a strict attention to my daughter’s welfare and happiness occupied my mind. The beauty of my daughter greatly attracted the notice of the young cavaliers of Madrid, who designedly met us in our walks; and, fearful some unpleasant intrigue might be the result of their civilities to her, I determined to leave the metropolis, and retire into a distant solitude: for her heart was engaged to Bertram, a cavalier of distinction, deservedly esteemed, and who was on a journey in Andalusia.

“Having communicated my intention to the friar, he highly commended so prudent a step, and advised me by all means not to prolong my stay in the city on any account.

‘It is a place,’ said he, ‘where vice and debauchery are the prevailing habits of the inhabitants, where the villanies of mankind are practised without fear or shame, and where youth and beauty remain insecure from violence, though under the immediate inspection of age and experience. The attention paid to

‘ Cleanthe by our young cavaliers, is the
 ‘ effect of a dissolute and lawless passion ;
 ‘ and her personal charms only draw forth
 ‘ their flattering admiration. In exposing
 ‘ her to injuries arising from constant adu-
 ‘ lation, you commit an act of immorality.
 ‘ Besides, if Bertram loves her, you hold
 ‘ in trust an inestimable treasure, far greater
 ‘ to him than the dominion of empires. I
 ‘ feel a regard for you, and of course be-
 ‘ come interested in your daughter’s wel-
 ‘ fare ; and as I have devoted my time and
 ‘ influence to the happiness of both, I shall
 ‘ continue to assist you in your solitude.
 ‘ Let me hear from you soon.’

“ He took my hand, and pressing it af-
 fectionately to his lips, retired, apparently
 in sorrow. I felt an unusual degree of re-
 gret in parting with a character so deserv-
 edly esteemed ; for I looked upon him as
 the protector of distressed innocence, and
 the friend of the unfortunate. I retired to
 rest, and continued musing upon my pil-
 low, until about the hour of midnight,
 when I was suddenly roused from reflection
 by the repeated and violent shrieks of a per-
 son in distress. I rose instantly, and rushing
 into my daughter’s bed chamber, found her
 almost lifeless, in the arms of a female ser-
 vant. I inquired the cause, but could gain
 no answer. At length I heard a violent and
 loud rap at the door, and, on looking out of
 the window, discovered a party of men

muffled in their cloaks, waiting near the portico. I demanded their business. They replied, that their commission did not extend so far as to answer that question, and bade me open the door. I withdrew from the window to the bedside, where my daughter sat; but I had scarce been there a minute, when the door was burst open, and three ruffians soon after entered the apartment. They instantly seized me and my daughter, and hurrying us into a coach that was waiting at the door, drove off to the prison of the Inquisition. When we arrived in the court yard, I begged to take a farewell of my daughter, whom they were hurrying away. This request was sternly denied: and forcing me along a narrow passage, they confined me in a loathsome dungeon. My grief at this unprincipled act of barbarity was unbounded; I tore my hair, and beat my bosom, in the anguish of horror and despair. I called upon the good and benevolent father of St. Dominic for assistance, but in vain; the dreadful stillness of the place seemed only interrupted by my disconsolate and afflicting cries. I continued for some weeks in my prison without seeing any human being, but the speechless ruffian that brought me food. One night, as I was consoling myself with a book of prayers that lay in my cell, a man in the habit of a friar came into my dungeon, and said he had terms to propose to me, upon which my li-

berty depended. I desired him to explain himself. He then replied,

‘ I am desired by the Holy Office to release you, provided you promise never to mention the circumstance of your imprisonment, nor demand your daughter; but to forget her.’

“ By this unfeeling and barbarous proposition I was almost harrowed up to a pitch of madness, and swore by the powers of heaven never to sacrifice an innocent and friendless child for liberty, although my sufferings were increased with tenfold severity.

‘ Then you are determined,’ said he, ‘ to languish in this horrid dungeon, at the expence of a little mistaken sensibility: your daughter will live in eastern magnificence; the mistress of a great man is a situation not to be rejected.’

“ Away!” I cried; “ for I will never yield to such abominable persuasions: I had rather expire upon the rack, than live the base betrayer of my daughter’s honour. I fell upon my knees, and prayed that she might drench her hands in the blood of him who dared, by such hellish means, to insult his God, and damn the character of his sex. The villain immediately struck me a blow on the face, and retired, muttering these words, as he closed the door—

‘ You will see her no more.’

“ In the gloom of solitude, and harassed

by reflection and sorrow, my fancy pictured the beautiful Cleanthe in the midst of her murderers; her piercing entreaties sounded in my ears, mingled with the horrid and blasphemous imprecations of those sanguinary ruffians. I thought I saw her bloody corpse lie lifeless on the ground, and knelt to kiss it: but when reason returned, and I found them but the dreams of a disturbed imagination, I threw myself in horror on the couch, and in floods of tears passed away the hours of night. In this dreadful situation I spent some months. My food was bad; and rendered feeble by the noxious vapours of the dungeon, my strength was not sufficient to withstand the consequences of a cold, and it gradually increased until I was reduced to the necessity of keeping my bed. I was then daily attended by a woman, who administered the medicines prescribed for my relief by the physician of the prison, and who constantly persuaded me to accept the terms offered by the friar for my liberty. Her endeavours were ineffectual. She excited my pity; for I justly concluded her conduct was the act of imperious necessity. After a few day's nursing, I was sufficiently recovered to quit my bed, and walk about my cell; and one night, as I was rising for exercise from my solitary couch, the door of my cell turned slowly upon its hinges, and a form, to all appearance the phantom of a female, bearing a small lamp in her right hand, and a bloody

cross in the left, stood before me. I shrieked aloud, and attempted to move; but on a sudden I seemed fixed to the spot, and the powers of utterance suspended. It pointed to some bloody marks upon its bosom, and with a slow and hollow voice spoke as follows:

‘Behold the spirit of your murdered daughter! Her body moulders amongst the unhallowed dead, in the secret caverns of this dreadful prison. To you her death may be ascribed: and to punish the obstinacy of a heart that might have saved, by yielding to mistaken prejudices, the life of an unfortunate child, I am doomed to visit you at the silent hour of midnight, when all eyes but thine are sealed in slumber.’

“It glared at me for some time with a terrific frown, when it looked up piteously, as to heaven, and left the apartment. Instantly I fell senseless on the floor: how long I laid in that situation I cannot tell; but when I had in some measure recovered my senses, I found myself in total darkness; for the light, which was placed near me on a projection of the rugged wall of my prison, I had in my convulsive struggles thrown down and extinguished. I passed the remainder of the night in prayer; and when the morning dawned, I became so sensible of my situation, that I had nearly insulted my God, by committing an act of suicide.

“ Some time after the first appearance of the ghost, it stood before me again about the hour of midnight, and, pointing to the wound, vanished as before. The next month I was taken from my dungeon, first having a handkerchief tied over my eyes, and conveyed away in a coach. After I had left the coach about an half an hour, it was removed, and I found myself in a cell, in the convent of St. Dominic, and Jerome sitting by my side. You may easily conceive my joy and surprise at finding myself in the company of my faithful friend. I fell upon his neck in an agony of sorrow, and, after a pause of some minutes, I told him of the villanous proceedings of some unknown Inquisitor, and the appearance of the spectre. His sympathy for my unhappy situation almost bordered upon madness. He wrung his hands, and appeared to feel for my misfortunes, in a manner that convinced me of his sincerity and disinterested regard for me. As we were conversing together, a voice uttered, in a solemn manner,

‘ Beware of the perfidious and designing
‘ fex!’

“ I started from my seat, but he caught me by my cloaths, and pulled me again towards him. We remained in a doubtful suspense for some time; but a prevailing silence convincing us we were alone, the conversation was resumed. It chiefly turned upon my daughter’s cruel death, and the

means I intended taking to reveal it to the world. I perceived him extremely agitated at this proposition, and he left the cell, as in deep thought. From that time I saw him no more. In the evening a monk brought me a flask of wine and some provisions, and begged that I would try to refresh myself by repose. The wine somewhat relieved my sinking spirits, and I laid down upon a mattress in the cell. Sleep overtook me; but about midnight I was awakened by a loud rap at the door. I rose from the couch, and opened it. A man in a mask immediately entered the cell, and led me from the monastery to a coach, that was waiting at a small door leading into a dark, narrow street. It drove off with us in it, to the house where you discovered me. On my entering it, an old, crooked woman bade me dry up my tears; for I should soon be happy. She led me to the room where you found me. I frequently urged her to tell me the cause of my imprisonment, but she never made me any answer. One day she brought a lamp and an old lute, which she said would afford me amusement when I was inclined to use it. It was an inestimable treasure. I constantly soothed my mind with the most plaintive airs I was master of, and cheered my gloomy apartment with the song of melancholy. I am indebted to you for my delivery and the preservation of my life, and must leave it to your own feelings to determine how sen-

sibly I revere your unlooked for generosity and humanity."

At the conclusion of this narrative Alexo turned to the lady, and replied,

"Alas! madam, the truth of your daughter's inhuman murder I can confirm. I once had the misfortune to be thrown into the prison of the Inquisition, and was put into the same dungeon where the unfortunate Cleanthe was confined."

Alexo then related to her the discovery of the manuscript, with the unburied bones of the child. He also undeceived her respecting the character of Jerome, and told her of his adventure with him and De Carros in the chapel of the convent of St. Dominic.

"Villain!" exclaimed Donna Clarinda, "was it for this that I innocently and virtuously admitted you into the sanctuary of my family, and cherished in my heart the seeds of gratitude? O God! how long is this execrable monster to triumph in his crimes? to insult thee, by profaning the holy altar? to mock the laws of religion? and, in contempt of thy sacred commands, riot in licentious depravity?"

Sorrow overcame her, and agitated by the convulsive struggles of horror and affection, she sunk into a swoon. Rose instantly flew for some water; and whilst they were busied in endeavouring to recover her, the dog barked loud, and footsteps of some person approaching the door were instantly

heard. It was Gaspardo. As he entered the house, he started in seeming surprise, and enquired the reason of Rose why they were not at rest?

"The hour is late," he cried; "perhaps you are not aware that it is past midnight."

She pleaded Clarinda's indisposition, in excuse for her conduct, and, after lighting a lamp for him, returned to her assistance. When Clarinda was so far recovered as to be able to walk, Rose conducted her to a chamber, and desiring to be called if she should in the night feel herself at all indisposed, left her to assuage the anguish of her heart in silent sorrow.

Whilst Alexo sat in the room below, by the embers of a wood fire, listening to the sighing of the night winds among the trees that surrounded the cottage, Gaspardo came down stairs with a brace of pistols in his girdle, and a large sabre under his arm. He looked suspiciously at Alexo, and asked him if he did not intend to go to rest that night. On Alexo's replying in the affirmative, and that he only waited for a lamp, he turned his appearance off with a smile, and said,

"You see, Sir, I carry with me forcible arguments in favour of my profession:—you understand me, I have no doubt; but be secret, for your life depends upon it.—Early in the morning I shall call you to work with me in the forest as a wood-cutter, to avoid suspicion. Rose will take care of

the lady. You will be acquainted with more of us in time.—Farewel.—Go directly to rest.”

He shook him by the hand, and quitted the cottage. Rose soon after made her appearance, and conducted Alexo to his chamber. Placing the lamp on the hearth of the fire-place, he seated himself by the window; for being now convinced into what hands he had fallen, he suffered himself to sink beneath the weight of sorrow and the dreadful horrors of reflection. As the moon rose at intervals from her bed of clouds, and shone upon the scene, he endeavoured to examine the situation of the cottage, that, if necessity should require it, he might be able to make his escape without difficulty: but the fear of being seen by Gaspardo, whom he suspected was lurking about the habitation, made him cautious of opening the window, and the thick brushwood that grew on all sides of the cottage limited his researches to a narrow circuit. He felt an inclination to lie down upon the mattress and repose himself, but suspicion and distrust too powerfully opposed the desires of nature. His little volume of favourite poems again supplied him with amusement; and fixing upon the following Sonnet, which he had often read in the gardens of the convent with exquisite delight, he did not seek to repose, until the morn broke through the shades of retiring night,

“And tip toe stood, on misty mountain tops.”

SONNET,

TO THE EVENING STAR.

WHEN coming twilight veils the neighb'ring plain,
 And tinkling sheep bells, in the distant fold,
 Sound cheerful to the flow-pac'd village swain,
 Who journeys, snow besprent, and sad with cold,
 Beside the drowsy team, along the vale;
 Then thou, pale herald of departing day,
 Cheer'st the poor woodman, as across the heath,
 Heedless of fleet, or the bleak wintry gale,
 He tracks, with lonely step, the beaten way,
 List'ning with silent fear the bell of death
 Or watch dog's howl; till ruddy elves appear,
 Greeting with shouts and smiles their toil-spent Sire,
 Who from the lorn wood's side is wont to bear
 The moss grown faggot for their ev'ning fire.

CHAPTER VI.

— " Now Nature speaks
 Her genuine language, and the words of men,
 Big with the very motion of their souls,
 Declare with what accumulated force
 Th' impetuous nerve of passion urges on
 'The native weight and energy of things.'

AKENSID^e.

WHEN Gaspardo quitted the cottage,
 he proceeded to join a gang of outlaws in
 their rendezvous amongst the secret recesses
 of a solitary ruin. It had been a monastery
 in the days of the primitive monks; several
 entire archways remained, and were
 beautifully covered with ivy and blooming
 wall-flowers. As he passed through one of
 these venerable monuments of antiquity,

the glimmering of a light amongst the ruins, at a little distance from the pathway he was pursuing, struck him with surprise. Darkness surrounded him, and the owl only disturbed the silence of the solitude as she rested on the mouldering battlements of the neighbouring ruin. He walked with hasty steps from the spot towards the recess, to join his companions; and before he had gained the private road that led to the cavern, he heard a voice repeat his name aloud several times. On turning to discover who it was, he perceived a man coming through the adjoining bushes with great precipitation. It was Jacques, the son of Don Alphonso. He carried a lighted torch in his hand, and as the flame beamed upon his countenance, Gaspardo discovered it the picture of terror and apprehension. He asked him in a low and tremulous tone, if he had seen any thing;

"Nothing," said Gaspardo. "The glimmering of a light in a distant part of the ruin startled me a little time back; but I suppose it was you, or some one of the band."

"Did not you see the brilliant cross it carried upon its bosom?" said Jacques, agitated in the extreme.

"The brilliant cross which it carried on its bosom! Why, the fellow is mad: I tell you, I saw nothing but a light at a distance."

"It is strange!" exclaimed Jacques,

“ that I should have seen these things so distinctly, and you nothing. It followed me through several windings of the wood, and looked at me with compassionate sorrow. If a murder has been committed in this solitary place, I thank God, I am not the perpetrator. There has been foul play somewhere Gaspardo.”

Jacques had scarce finished his speech, when he started forward, and caught Gaspardo by the arm—

“ Look,” said he in a whisper, “ yonder is the spectre; it is now stealing through the middle archway of the ruin; let us follow it.”

“ Hold!” cried Gaspardo, “ not for the dominion of the earth would I follow a ghost. I say, let us retire; we may repent our temerity; for these nightly wanderers of the grave are generally averse to the curiosity of mortals.”

Jacques with great reluctance consented to his proposal, and they hurried by the nearest way to the cavern, where they expected to meet the band.

When they entered the private passage that led to the subterraneous apartment, they heard the sound of voices, mingled with frequent bursts of laughter. The band was assembled; and when they entered the recess, Grinaldo reproached them with delay. They, in excuse for their conduct, related the whole of their adventure

near the old archway, but met with contempt and ridicule from the band; some of whom were in a state of intoxication. The subject was dropped, and they by turns questioned Gaspardo respecting the lady in his possession, and the quantity of silver and other valuables stolen from the jew at Madrid. He faithfully related every circumstance attending that adventure, and begged to know if Alexo might be taken into the gang.

Grinaldo addressed them. He said, that as their leader, Don Alphonso, was not present, it would be inconsistent with their established rules to adopt any measure, or consent to any proposal without his knowledge. He therefore proposed an adjournment to the next night at the same hour. This was generally consented to, and they separated, each for his respective habitation.

Early in the morning Gaspardo called Alexo from his bed, and equipping him in an old leathern jacket, put an axe into his hand, and bade him accompany him.— They went into a remote part of the forest, and began felling wood for faggots. As they were busy at work, a man seemingly in deep reflection, with a spear under his arm, passed by them.

“That is Don Alphonso,” said Gaspardo, “our captain; I must speak to him, but will return immediately.”

He followed Alphonso through the thic-

ket, and continued with him for some time. At length they both approached Alexo, and Gaspardo introduced him as his friend to the captain. Alphonso gave him his hand with an air of such respectful politeness, that it convinced Alexo, he was not one of the same stamp with Gaspardo; and misfortune appeared upon his brow, marked with the strongest characters.

When Alphonso parted with them, he retired to his cottage. As night approached, he felt himself unusually restless, and disturbed in his mind. He walked in the garden before the cottage, but a propensity to melancholy reflection obliged him to retire to rest. He fell into a light slumber; but about midnight he awoke, in consequence of a loud clap of thunder that shook the cottage to its foundation; he started from his bed, and, hastening to the window, perceived the heavens sheeted with lightning. Ere the tempest ceased, he sunk again to sleep. But in his dreams the terrific images of death and murder harassed him until the cold drops of perspiration poured down his forehead upon his pillow, already wet with tears. On a sudden he again started from his bed, and supporting himself by the curtain, exclaimed,

“ If thou art suffered by Providence to revisit the earth, say, bloody spectre, what is the crime thou comest to charge me with? What deed have I committed, that

the quiet of my repose should be thus disturbed?—Speak to the purpose of thy visit.”

At this instant he was roused from a state of almost perfect insensibility by a loud rap at his chamber door.

“Who is there?” he cried.

“Your son,” replied Jacques, “who is come to remind you of your engagement with the band.”

“I will be with you instantly,” he answered.

After a few minutes he became collected; for the vision, that he supposed himself to be addressing, he found nothing more than the impression of a horrid dream: but as he passed under the mouldering walls of the once sainted edifice, to gain a private path that led to the cavern, his heart thrilled with an unaccountable dread. The dream still created in his mind a superstitious fear; and considering it as the warning of some dreadful event near at hand, the moaning of the wind among the trees that shaded the fragments of the towers, or the bat, as it flitted in his way, caused him to start involuntarily with horror.

On his entering the cavern, the band rose to receive him, but expressed their astonishment at his unusual appearance. — His cloak thrown carelessly over his shoulders, his hair dishevelled, and without being armed, he seemed like one distracted.

Grinaldo approached him with concern,

and inquired the cause of his singular appearance.

He assumed a cheerful countenance, and assured them he was perfectly well, but had overslept himself; and that the disorder of his clothes arose partly from forgetfulness, and partly from the precipitate manner in which he left his bed. He begged the business of the night might not be interrupted, and seating himself at the head of the council, began to question Gaspardo concerning the adventure at Madrid.

"It is unparalleled in the annals of finesse," said one; "the plan was executed with infinite credit to the connoisseur that projected it."

"Yes," replied Moreau, a robber of the most abandoned and sanguinary principles, "it was excellently contrived and executed; but the lady is the subject that most demands our attention. She in all probability will discover the nature of our profession, if we send her away, and our lives will no doubt pay for such incautious conduct; and if we retain her, she will inevitably be a disagreeable burthen to us. It is a melancholy reflection, that the crime of murder should be registered amongst the acts of imperious necessity; but so it is; and in this instance we must not depart from the sure method of preserving our lives and property."

"Why not," said Don Alphonso, "im-

prison her? Is it like men, to murder a woman in cold blood? Is it possible, Moreau, you can reconcile such a horrid act of barbarity to your conscience? Is Nature so deficient in her duty, as not to shudder at such unprincipled cruelty? I shall never voluntarily consent to the proposition."

A warm debate took place; but Moreau continued firmly to support his plan upon principles of the vilest nature; the majority too were of his opinion; and in spite of Alphonso's threats and intreaties, the question was carried in the affirmative.

Jacques was the person to whose lot fell the executive part of this barbarous decree.

When affliction drives us to despair, it is to the silent walks of solitude that the mind turns with peculiar pleasure to indulge itself in melancholy sorrow; for the deep gloom of the grove at midnight, and the stillness of the hour, interrupted only at intervals by the nightingale, call forth the energy of contemplation, and inspire the unfortunate with a degree of pleasing reflection, not to be met with in the busy walks of life, crowded with the sons of licentiousness and bigotry. Alphonso retired alone from the cavern, and wandered in the most solitary parts of the forest.

"Thank God," said he, "that I had sufficient courage to oppose the villains in their design upon the life of this unfortunate stranger. I have done my duty as a man, although I have been unsuccessful in

my endeavours to prevent them from murdering her. She may be married, and have a helpless family depending on her for protection. I am married, Oh God! and have left exposed to the insults of an imperious world a wife and daughter, coward-like, rather than meet my fate upon the scaffold. Oh my Clarinda!—my Cleanthe!”

At this moment a man approached him, muffled in his cloak. Alphonso, suspecting it was one of the robbers, fled from the spot, and endeavoured to secrete himself; when the stranger threw his cloak on the ground, and hastily followed him. Finding himself unable to elude the vigilance of his pursuer, he waited his arrival, and discovered in the unknown the person of his son.

“ Oh! my father,” said Jacques, “ to-night the lady is to die, and I am the person commissioned by the gang to perpetrate the deed. Tell me, if the tie that binds me to this horde of ruffians is so sacred, as to be esteemed before those of honour and humanity?—Oh God! these hands are yet unpolluted with the blood of human nature; and to steep them deliberately in that of innocence,—to plunge a dagger in the bosom of a guiltless stranger, an unfortunate victim of treachery, would doom me to eternal misery, in the pit of hell. By the powers that rule the world, I cannot do it. I had rather die by the swords of our

confederates, than live to think upon a crime that no penitence can expiate."

"My son," replied Alphonso, "reflect upon the dreadful consequences of a refusal. You will be instantly sacrificed to the fury of Moreau, that sanguinary ruffian. It is the first crime, *wisfully* committed, that dooms the perpetrator to an eternal punishment in the world to come. Perhaps it may be pardoned. The mercy of God is infinite; and the victim of dire necessity is not like a voluntary agent. If you are destroyed, I shall be left to the mercy of these fellows, without one on whom I can depend for assistance, if necessity should require it."

They heard a horn sounded in a distant part of the forest, and fearing some of the party might surprise them, hastily left the spot, and gained their cottage unobserved.

When the fatal evening approached, it appeared to Jacques unusually dark and still. The wild shrieks of the death bird were constantly heard near the cottage; and the wind, as it blew hollow amongst the trees, sounded to him mournful and prophetic. The time of midnight drew near. Tears prevented Alphonso from speaking; but he roused Jacques from a state of stupefaction, and pointed to the dial, the hand of which was upon the hour of twelve.

"I go," he cried, as he unsheathed a shining poniard; "I go to steep my hands

in human blood; but necessity has no law, and I hope to make my peace with God."

Muffling himself in his cloak, he left the cottage, and proceeded immediately for Gaspardo's hut. It was past twelve when he reached it, and he found Gaspardo waiting his arrival at the garden gate.

"Where is the lady?" said Jacques, as he entered the hut.

"Hush!" cried the villain; "she sleeps in the chamber directly over us, and has been in bed but a short time."

"Is Alexo in the cottage?"

"Oh, no!" replied Gaspardo; he is safe: I watched him into the most secret part of the ruins. All is ready; and I have purposely trimmed the lamp in her chamber with bad oil: for the fainter light, you know, the better you will be able to escape if she should awake."

Jacques ascended the stairs, and discovered the door of the chamber ajar; he cautiously entered the apartment, and was proceeding to the bed side, when a faint groan, that echoed along the room, arrested his attention. Immediately a cold dew spread all over him. He durst not advance to perpetrate the deed; and for some time strove in vain to conquer the unaccountable dread that seized him. After a little time had elapsed, he collected himself, and advancing to the bed, to execute his bloody commission, drew back the curtains, and gazed upon Clarinda, who was in a pro-

found repose, with silent and agonizing sorrow.

"Her next sleep," said he, as he raised his arm to plunge a dagger in her bosom, "will be in death."

She instantly sighed, and repeated, with tender emphasis,

"Alphonso! Oh! Alphonso!"

Struck with surprise and horror at this unexpected circumstance, he was precipitately quitting the room, when the glittering of a diamond cross, that lay upon the table where the lamp was placed, attracted his notice. He immediately recollected that his father had frequently inquired of him, if he had ever seen one of the same kind, in the possession of any of the banditti, and, stepping gently to the table, he took it up, and was on the point of examining it by the lamp, when some one whispered his name at the door. Suspecting it to be Gaspardo, he secreted the cross in his bosom, and opened the door with an intention to dismiss him by a significant frown. But the way was perfectly clear, and without loss of time he locked the door, and put the key into his pocket.

"She must be roused from slumber before any one can enter the chamber," he whispered to himself, "and may alarm Rose with her shrieks, if Gaspardo's villany should prompt him to murder her before my return."

The ruffian was waiting for him, wrapt

in a long fur cloak, at the bottom of the stairs.

"Have you executed your commission? Is the lady dead?" he cried, eagerly catching hold of Jacques, as he passed him.

"No," he replied. "As I was about to murder her, I found I had, in my haste to be punctual to the time appointed for the purpose, forgot to arm myself with a dagger. She sleeps very sound, and I shall be gone but a few minutes."

"That is bad," exclaimed the villain, "very bad indeed; but you need not return. Here," drawing a dagger from his belt, "here is one that knows its duty; take it, and be quick about the matter: the night is very far advanced, and the morning will be upon us before we can set things to rights again."

"I dare not," said Jacques, as he shook the ruffian by the hand, "I dare not disobey the orders of Moreau, who gave me one of his own daggers, and bade me bring it to him again, crimsoned with her blood. You know his temper."

"I do, I do," cried Gaspardo; "he is the father of every thing that is inhuman and bad;—passionate and blood-thirsty to a degree of barbarity. Go, and return speedily; for I shall be very furly and displeased, if the lady is not murdered to-night."

Instantly Jacques flew to his father's cottage, and rapped loudly at the door. He

waited in dreadful anxiety for admittance, but no one appeared. He tried to open it, but in vain. The time was precious; and such an unfortunate delay almost drove him to distraction. After a few moments deliberation, he determined to search for him in the old sepulchre, his father's nightly haunt for private reflection and prayer; but ere he had closed the garden gate, Alphonso appeared armed with a naked sword, and seized his son by the arm. Suspecting him to be one of the gang, who had been to plunder his habitation, he demanded his business in an angry tone, and threatened him with death for his temerity.

"Pardon me, father!" exclaimed Jacques, "but I have accidentally discovered"—He interrupted him.

"Is it Jacques? How! so soon returned, my son? Have you murdered the lady?"

"No: circumstances of a very interesting nature prevented me. The cross you so often told me to respect, as the hallowed tribute of affection, I found in the possession of this unfortunate lady."

"Great God!" exclaimed Alphonso, "it cannot be true. Where is it? Give it me, that I may satisfy my suspicions."

A lamp was instantly lighted at the glowing embers of a wood fire; and the moment Alphonso's eyes were cast upon the cross, animation seemed for a time suspended. At length, a flood of tears flowed down his cheeks, and, supporting himself

upon his sword, he lifted his eyes to heaven, and exclaimed,

"Accept my thanks, O God! for thy merciful and benign protection." Turning to Jacques, "You said, you had not murdered her?"

"I did; but I promised Gaspardo that I would return, and dispatch her before morning."

"Not for the sole possession of all earthly treasures. Return directly with this ring, and wake her: at the first sight of it she may be alarmed; but conjure her to be silent, and follow your directions. Wrap her in this cloak, and bring her as a dead body from the villain's cottage to the old sepulchre amongst the ruins; I will there wait your return. Be bold and resolute in the execution of this trust; for the lady, whom you was commissioned to murder, is your—MOTHER."

They separated at the entrance of the wood, and Jacques returned with all possible haste to the cottage of Gaspardo, and found him, as before, waiting for him at the garden gate.

"So, so!" he exclaimed, as Jacques approached, "you have at last found your way back again. If expedition is requisite in cases of necessity, you are a very pretty fellow to confide in. Damme, you will soon find that my associates are no such easy-

Jacques bearing in his arms

tempered gentlemen, if you flatter yourself that cowardly tricks are accomplishments."

He gave him no reply; but making his way up stairs, unlocked the chamber door, and stepping gently to the bed side, awoke Clarinda. She shrieked aloud, on perceiving a man, armed with a drawn dagger, leaning upon her pillow.

"Hush!" said he, "for God's sake; your life depends upon silence and your obeying my commands."

"Villain!" she exclaimed, "that naked poniard plainly evinces your business in my my chamber at this late hour. Hesitate not to fulfil your trust: I will cheerfully forgive you; for I am tired of my existence."

"I am no murderer," he replied, laying hold of her hand, "but your friend; rise, and look at this ring."

She immediately quitted the bed (having retired to rest in her cloaths), and examined it at the lamp. A livid paleness diffused itself over her countenance, as she pressed it to her lips, and rushing into the arms of Jacques, swooned on his bosom.

He immediately pierced his hand with the dagger, and staining the bed cloaths and floor with blood, wrapt the lifeless Clarinda in his cloak, and quitted the apartment, with her in his arms. Gaspardo met him upon the stairs—

"Joy, joy!" he cried, when he saw Jacques bearing Clarinda in his arms.

down his cheeks, and

"Suppose I assist you in burying the body."

"Assist me to bury the body indeed, when there is an hour's work up stairs for you. The bed cloaths and floor are stained with blood, and Rose will evidently discover what we have been about, if she finds such marks of cruelty in the chamber."

"True," answered Gaspardo; "that is well thought of. Rose must not be in the secret; her confounded ideas of humanity and religion would cause me to lead the life of a dog, if she found us out."

Looking through the cottage window,

"Come, come," he cried, "there are many stars yet to be seen; the morning is not so near as I expected. Farewel, my good fellow: let her have a decent burial; and be sure you do not suffer your conscience to get the better of your courage."

He opened the door, and continued watching Jacques until he disappeared, by striking suddenly into an intricate path that led into the bosom of the wood; when he returned to the chamber, in order to free it from the suspicious marks of villany it exhibited.

Jacques hurried to the sepulchre, and found his father at the entrance, anxiously waiting his return. He flew to meet him, and, clasping the insensible Clarinda in his arms, proceeded instantly by a private pathway to his cottage.

When he had recovered her from the natural effect of so unexpected an event, mutual sensations of joy and sorrow succeeded: but it is by conception only, that the feelings of Alphonso and Clarinda can be known; the powers of language are inadequate to such a task.

She fell upon his breast, and exclaimed in a flood of tears,

“Oh, my beloved husband! since that fatal night which separated us, I have been harrassed by a succession of unprecedented and cruel misfortunes. The hallowed bosom of the church, that sacred refuge for the unfortunate, contains your worst and barbarous enemy. Oh, my husband! your daughter, the beautiful and adored Cleanthe, is murdered.”

“Murdered!” cried Alphonso, as he started from his chair, “murdered! did you say, murdered? Where was the hand of Bertram? Where his boasted love for my Cleanthe?”

“Yes,” replied Clarinda, “murdered, foully murdered, by Jerome, a friar of the order of St. Dominic. Bertram at the time was on a journey in Andalusia.”

“Almighty God! I never expected to combat with this misfortune, in addition to the sorrows thou hast loaded me with.”

His speech faltered, he staggered to his chair, and burst into a flood of tears. As soon as he had recovered himself, Clarinda related to him her unjust confinement in

the prison of the Inquisition, the cause of her daughter's murder, and the appearance of the spectre.

When she mentioned the bloody cross, Alphonso recollected that the spirit, which he fancied had appeared to him in his chamber during the tempest, held the same emblem of catholic perfidy in its hand; from this circumstance he concluded that it must have been the apparition of his beloved Cleanthe.

When Alphonso related to her his adventures since their parting, and the mode of life he pursued, Clarinda was struck with the deepest concern and astonishment.

"It is an act of necessity," said Alphonso; "for as Jacques and myself were travelling through this forest, we were surprised by robbers, habited as herdsmen, and conducted to a castle hard by, where we remained in confinement for some days. At last, the master offered us our lives, if we would consent to join the gang, and live in the forest with his associates. This proposal was not rejected; and we have only waited a favourable opportunity to effect our escape; a plan for that purpose is now in agitation."

The dawn of day was now seen to break through the branches of the tall trees that surrounded the cottage; and Alphonso, after procuring some refreshment for Cla-

inda, left Jacques in the cottage with his mother, and retired alone into the wood.

As he was at work, making faggots, he heard a man utter the following soliloquy:—
 “No reasoning shall convince me to the contrary. Day after day the same horrid acts are perpetrated with impunity. There is a God, whom we are taught to adore as the spirit of universal benevolence and justice:—why the bolts of his almighty vengeance are not hurled against these villains; why the laws of morality and religion are to be grossly violated; and why an established system of debauchery and murder is to be erected by the ministers of his holy word,—are questions, that no philosophy, however subtle, can satisfy. Last night the unfortunate stranger was murdered, and the perpetrator of that horrid crime is a man. Great God! I burn with indignation, when I find myself a being capable of committing premeditated acts of the blackest and most malignant dye,—of ranking myself with the world of brutes, by hunting down my fellow-creatures for prey. If the mouldering corse of that unfortunate victim be secreted in this forest, may the caves and lonely recesses ring with the piercing complaints of her wandering ghost! may it haunt the villain in his retirement, and harrow up his mind to the highest pitch of distracting wretchedness!”
 Struck with surprise at this singular speech, Alphonso made towards the spot

where he heard the voice, and discovered Alexo prostrate on the ground, and in tears.

He spoke to him. The sorrower rose from the ground, and was hastily retiring.

"Why," said Alphonso, "will you fly me? Why desert the man who is your friend? Why quit the society of one who is destined to endure, in exile with yourself, the keenest pangs of sorrow and misfortune? The lady whom you so affectionately lament, is alive."

"Alive!" exclaimed Alexo, as he rushed towards Alphonso.

"Yes," he replied, "she is alive, and in a place of security. I possess but little knowledge of your character, but have entrusted you with a secret on which my life depends, confident you are worthy of my esteem, from the sentiments you have just now uttered in this solitude.—But I see Gaspardo at a distance. Meet me to night at twelve, near the old archway in the ruins, and you shall be further acquainted with me and my friends. Farewel."

At the hour of midnight Don Alphonso committed Clarinda to the care of his son, and, wrapping himself in his cloak, went to the old archway, where he found Alexo waiting for him, as appointed.

The moon had risen, and shining with unclouded brilliancy upon the scene, her light enabled them to proceed with expedition to the ruin.

“ Here,” said Alphonso, as he entered the sepulchre, “ here I retire alone, when I can escape from the company of our associates, to devote a few hours to reflection, and the memory of those days which I spent free from care and distress, in the bosom of my beloved, though now unhappy, family.”

He seated himself near a mutilated statue of the Virgin Mary, and began his history by discovering to Alexo his real situation with the robbers, and the cause that forced him from his home; he mentioned the appearance of the spirit, and lamented with the severest sorrow the loss of his unfortunate child.

“ Oh, my friend!” replied Alexo, “ the opinion you heard me deliver concerning religion, flowed from the inmost recesses of my heart. I was initiated at an early age into the monastery of St. Dominic at Madrid, but discovering the friars of the order to possess principles of the most abandoned nature, I left the sanctuary in disgust, and was, in consequence, thrown into the horrid prison of the Inquisition. It was in my dungeon, Don Alphonso, that I accidentally found a manuscript written by your daughter, containing an account of her sufferings inflicted by Don Jerome, of the order of St. Dominic, her persecutor. The mouldering remains of an infant were also discovered in the same hole with the manuscript.”

"Oh God!" exclaimed Alphonso, "the tale harrows me up to distraction.—You positively can confirm her death?"

"I can," said Alexo: the manuscript was finished by another person, who affirmed, that Jerome one night, after having urged the gratification of his brutal passion in vain, stabbed her to the heart.—But his villainy will not escape punishment. I have deposited the manuscript and unburied bones of the babe with Friar Francis, a virtuous and holy monk of the same order, who has given me a solemn promise to exert his influence in bringing the guilty Jerome to the bar of justice."

"God will reward you," replied Alphonso: "but I can no longer listen to a fact so replete with hellish cruelty and distress."—He sunk upon the ground in the agony of sorrow.

At this moment a horn was sounded on the outside of the sepulchre.

"Hark!" cried Alphonso, "that fatal note portends no good; some of our party are abroad to-night, waiting, I suppose, to seize upon the unfortunate travellers that are bewildered in this dreadful forest."

The sudden rushing of the wind down the staircase had nearly extinguished the light, and footsteps were soon after distinctly heard of some person descending into the sepulchre. Alexo unsheathed his sword, and was proceeding with Alphonso to re-

connoitre round the building, when Grinaldo entered the sanctuary.

"You are in tears, Alphonso," said he, as he entered the tomb: "are you so frail in nature, as to seek out a solitude to play the woman in?"

"Alas! Grinaldo, you know not what piercing and undeserved sorrows have happened to my family since my unfortunate flight from Madrid. My daughter, the beautiful and beloved Cleanthe,—Oh God! where was thy protecting arm?"—

"What can this mean?" exclaimed Grinaldo: "these frantic and distressing invocations! this distracted countenance! these tears! They must arise from some secret and severe misfortunes. Oh! suffer me to share them with you; suffer me to mourn in friendship over the records of your misery."

"I cannot repeat the tale," said Alphonso, drowned in tears: "I cannot think of it, but with the fury of a madman; it is a crime too black for the catalogue of human villanies; it is a deed that would blast the character of a savage. If there is a hell, Jerome cannot escape the punishments of the damned."

Grinaldo then listened to a circumstantial account of the whole affair; but ere Alexo had finished his tale, he looked at him with surprise, and, grasping his hand, exclaimed,

"Do you say, a monk of the order of St. Dominic?"

"Yes, Sir," replied Alexo: "the villain was also a moral lecturer and confessor to the convent of St. Catherine's."

"St. Catherine's?" cried Grinaldo. "Is it possible that Bissare, a woman who was so universally esteemed in Madrid for her piety, her benevolence, and rigid adherence to morality, could admit into the sanctuary of her convent so profligate a character?"

"Ah, Sir!" replied Alexo, "I am afraid she is not worthy of the good opinion you entertain of her. I once rescued from destruction a nun who was privately conveyed through a subterraneous passage from the priory of St. Catherine's, to the chapel of St. Dominic's convent. I have in my possession a picture which I found in the church, after her enemies had disappeared with her. In the height of her distress she frequently pressed it to her lips, and gazed upon it with affectionate rapture."—

He presented the miniature to Grinaldo.

"The friars," he continued, "in a conversation that I overheard, called her Amantha."

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Grinaldo, striking his forehead violently with his hand. "What a secret have you revealed! what distressing tortures has that name conveyed to my afflicted heart! This picture I with horror confess to be mine: my suspicions are confirmed. Oh, Alphonso, Amantha is the daughter of your wretched and distracted friend. This picture, when

last we separated, I gave her in the convent parlour: she kissed it a thousand times, and hurried it to her bosom, as the most sacred repository for a treasure ever to be adored and beloved. Misfortunes drove me from Madrid; the loss of a beautiful and beloved wife compelled me to forsake the world: I travelled for the re-establishment of my health, impaired by sorrow; but being seized by robbers, my servants were murdered, and myself conducted to this forest. I committed Amantha to the protection of the perfidious Bissare, until my return, and this is the reward of my liberality and confidence. Accursed wretches! what vice, what deliberate villany is there, that ye do not practise under the cloak of religion? Oh God! this load of life is insupportable. In me, Alphonso, you behold the father of the too much injured Bertram: him, who with high toned authority forbade his son the common right of participating the affections of the unfortunate Cleanthe. Heaven has now sufficiently punished me. Oh, my children!"

"Is this the father of Bertram?" said Alphonso, as he took him by the hand.—"Is it possible that I find Don Bertram de Leyva my companion in distress?"

A pause of some minutes ensued; when Alphonso exclaimed,

"Come, come, we must not think too much of our misfortunes, nor brood with distress over the past errors of our lives; ra-

ther let us seek out the capital, and hunt this barbarous libertine from his den. Is it worthy of our sex to endure calamities patiently, that call aloud for justice and the scourge of revenge? We must not live to countenance a crime, which by the sacred ties of parental affection we are bound to punish. These murderers of our children shall not triumph in their guilt. To-morrow at midnight I purpose leaving this haunt; part of the gang will be upon an excursion, and we can with ease master the rest, if their curiosity should prompt them to watch our conduct. Oh, my friend! let us not give ourselves up to despair. There is an invisible protection extended to the unfortunate; for the lady, who was to have been so barbarously murdered last night by Jacques, proved to be his mother. Yes, Don Bertram, she is the wife of your unhappy friend."

"Great God!" he cried, "when will the hovering clouds of mystery disperse, or fortune leave us to repose in quietude? I consent to leave the gang to-morrow night. Alexo, you will accompany us?"

"O yes! resolutely will I undertake any thing, to escape from such a perilous existence."

"Then," said Alphonso, "we will secure the horses in our possession, and station them by the last fountain in the great pathway of the forest, as the day closes, with

my son Jacques and Alexo. We can repair secretly about midnight to the place, when all is quiet, and the thieves at the skirts of the wood. We must arm ourselves, for fear of an attack."

When they had fully settled the plan for their escape, and were about to separate for the night, a horn was again heard at a little distance from the ruin: they listened attentively for some time, but all was silent; at last they accidentally perceived a man skulking among the ruins.

"That is one of the gang," said Alphonso. "The villain, in all probability, has overheard our conversation. You, Alexo, had better return with Grinaldo to his cottage, in case of a surprise."

Alexo readily acceded to the proposal, and they parted.

When Alphonso entered his cottage, Clarinda was sitting in the chamber by a small fire, reading a book of prayer. He communicated to her and Jacques his intention of decamping in the night with his friends from the haunts of the robbers, and bade them be in readiness to accompany him.

"You do not mean," said she, with anxiety, "to enter Madrid but in disguise?"

"I cannot live in peace," cried Alphonso, "whilst the murderer of my daughter exists; but we will talk of that on our journey: let us now go to bed, for I have need of repose."

About an hour after they had retired to rest, Alphonso was disturbed by the sound of footsteps on the stairs, and soon after by a gentle shaking of his chamber door. He seized his sword, and rose from his bed, to discover the cause of his alarm; when he met Gaspardo cautiously entering the room with a naked dagger in his hand. On perceiving Alphonso, he started, as with surprise, and immediately extinguished the lamp that stood upon the table near the fire place. The disappearance of the light was the appointed signal for assistance from without; and instantly another ruffian entered the chamber. The moon fortunately was at the full, and shone with great brilliancy through the lattice. Alphonso, by this circumstance was enabled to defend himself against the united attacks, of the ruffians. He shouted for assistance. At that instant Gaspardo fired a pistol, but the shot passed by him, and pierced through the curtains of the bed. Jacques, who was sleeping in a room above, roused by the noise in his father's chamber, entered the apartment, and found his father gallantly engaged in a desperate combat with one of the ruffians. He instantly took part in the conflict, and shot him through the head. Gaspardo, on hearing Jacques upon the stairs, contrived to make his escape. During the scuffle, Donna Clarinda had fainted. As they were endeavouring to re-

cover her, footsteps were again heard upon the stairs. They left the bedside, and prepared to renew the combat; but Alexo entered, in his shirt, covered with blood, and a naked sword in his hand.

"The barbarous ruffians," he cried, "are foiled in their attempt to murder us."

"Where is Don Bertram?" said Alphonso; "is he fallen?"

"Oh, no!" replied Alexo; "he sent me here to warn you of the danger that threatened us; but I see you have had your share in the fray."

At this moment a voice without shouted, "Halloo, halloo!"

"There he is," cried Alphonso; and rushing down stairs, found him at the door, dragging along with him a wounded robber.

"This is the only one alive out of three," said Don Bertram; "and I propose this fellow to make a confession of the horrid conspiracy against our lives."

By this time the party had assembled below, and a fire lighted upon the hearth.—Mutual congratulations now passed between them, and Don Alphonso embraced the almost expiring Clarinda in a transport of affectionate joy. In vain did they urge the dying ruffian to confess; the natural brutality of his disposition, aided by the effect of his immoral habits, rendered him fullen and obstinate: but when the convulsions of death warned him of his dissolution, he

confessed the whole plan, and gave a circumstantial account of what course the robbers intended to pursue after they had accomplished their design.

“ Previous to this abandoned way of enriching ourselves,” he cried, with apparent contrition, “ we were friars belonging to the holy order of St. Dominic: but by too strictly observing and enforcing the laws by which the society was regulated, we incurred the displeasure of Father Jerome, an officer of the Inquisition, who drove us from the convent in ignominy, and under the disgraceful charge of incontinence. To save his own reputation, he persuaded the Inquisitors to issue orders to all convents in Spain not to admit us. Persecuted, and with beggary staring us in the face”——

His speech faltered, and in an instant he expired without a groan.

In the morning Don Alphonso and his companions buried the bodies of the thieves in an unfrequented part of the forest, and saddling the horses of the banditti, left their wild retreat for the capital. They journeyed through the bye ways of the forest until the shades of evening approached, when they entered upon a wide, uninhabited plain. The night proved tempestuous; but encouraged with the hope of discovering some herdsman’s cottage upon the wild, they determined to pursue their route, and aban-

doned the idea of returning back into the forest for shelter.

As they ascended a hill, one of the party discovered a light at some distance; and, making for the spot, they found it proceeded from a taper burning in the chamber window of a solitary hut. Jacques called aloud for admittance, but no one answered or appeared. They plainly saw, through a crevice in the door, the blaze of a wood fire, and an extinguished lamp upon a small table before it. After waiting some time, and repeating their shouts with violent raps at the door, a woman opened the small window near the roof, and inquired who they were, and what they wanted.

"We are benighted travellers," said Jacques, "and request an admittance."

"I dare not let you in," she replied; "my life would be forfeited, if I did.—There is a castle not far off, if you pursue your journey in a strait line from the next monumental cross."

Jacques urged his request with repeated promises of protection from violence, but to no purpose; she continued firm to her first answer, and withdrew.

As they were about to break open the door, a person at some distance repeated the name of Gaspard.

Jacques immediately suspected the signal, and, muffling himself in his cloak, advanced to meet the stranger.

On his approach the man whispered, "Is it all over, and are the bodies buried?"

"Yes," said Jacques; "but more of that when we get into the cottage: at the door are some fresh travellers, waiting for admittance; take time, and we may dispatch them also."

"Bravo!" cried the man, "bravo! Let us go in through the stable. I have been upon the watch some time for you."

He conducted Jacques through a private way into the hut, and immediately opened the door, to admit his friends.

But on Alexo's unmuffling his face, the woman, whom they discovered to be Rose, the wife of Gaspardo, immediately exclaimed,

"Lord of heaven! we are undone."

"Why, how now!" cried the astonished herdsman. "What, in the name of the devil, have I been deceived? By the blood of the virgin" (laying his hand on his dagger)——

"Hold," cried Jacques, as he drew his sword from the scabbard; "we come to tell you that your companions are at rest in their graves. Their villany was detected, and we have sacrificed them to our resentment."

Ah!" said Rose, "I told them all how it would be; but they still persisted in the scheme. Well! they have got their reward now for all their crimes, and I am free from a monster."

At this the herdsman assumed a more cheerful countenance, and brought out the best of every thing that his cupboard afforded, bidding the travellers make merry, and endeavoured with affected hospitality to drown all suspicion as to his real character. During the night, however, he several times quitted the cottage, and returned apparently more and more dissatisfied: suspecting the tale of Jacques's to be unfounded, he repeatedly whistled loud and shrill from the chamber window, and left a light burning in the casement that looked towards the forest; but as the morning dawned, without the appearance of Gaspardo and his associates, he despaired of being revenged upon his guests, and behaved to them with great civility and attention.

Soon after day-break, they left the herdsman's cottage, and taking a beaten road, as directed by their host, pursued their journey until noon, when they arrived at an inn, contiguous to a small village, upon the highway, where they alighted for refreshment. On entering a small room, appropriated for travellers of respectable appearance, they perceived a proclamation stuck over the chimney piece. It related the recovery of the king from a violent and alarming fit of sickness; and that in consequence of so fortunate an event, it recalled all exiles, of whatever denomination; pardoned the supposed conspirators, who had

fled from the vengeance of the state, and restored the confiscated property of the delinquents. It is impossible to express the joy this agreeable intelligence diffused over every countenance: they embraced each other in exultation, and, after having procured a carriage for the better accommodation of Clarinda, pursued their journey to Madrid with the utmost dispatch.

CHAPTER VII.

"Vain are thy thoughts, O child of mortal birth!
And impotent thy tongue." — *AKENSIDE.*

THE body of Francis was buried in the cemetery of St. Dominic, with the accustomed pomp and solemnity observed upon such occasions. A tomb was erected by the brotherhood over his ashes, and a consecrated lamp burned during the night, near the monument.

Jerome was called by the brotherhood to the office of superior; and when he reflected that he was abbot of a powerful monastic house, an officer of the Inquisition, and the confessor of a sectary, unrivalled for the beauty of its nuns, and governed by an abbess too intimately connected with himself to respect the ties of honour or morality,—he smiled, within himself, contemptuously on the world; and regardless of that purity of character which should

ever distinguish a priest, his creed was made up of the most licentious artifices, which he practised without compunction. The abbess of St. Catherine's was his idol: he found her a woman of great talents, and a proficient in every kind of vice; her schemes were laid with the deepest penetration, assisted by the cloak of religion, and executed with all the secret skill and address that dissimulation requires. He visited her continually, under the pretence of administering consolation to the sisterhood in the confessional chair; but, in truth, only to riot with his mistress in pleasures of the most extravagant and libidinous nature. Callous to the piercing calls of conscience, he, in the outward display of piety and professional austerity, secreted the growing vices of his corrupt heart. Power, in a variety of instances, has been known to produce a perversion of all that is humane and good in mankind; which is sufficiently instanced in history, from Sylla to the Duke of Alva. The mind of Jerome had been equally debased by power; which, however, in his sphere could only be made subservient to dissipation, and the pleasures of an indelicate voluptuary.

He had risen early one morning, having in his dreams spent a night of visionary happiness, and was walking beneath a row of beautiful elms (where the scattered flowers impregnated the air with the most exquisite odour), to refresh his spirits, languid with

the force of imagination, when De Carros appeared, hurrying towards him. His countenance was expressive of terror and dismay.

“What is the matter?” said Jerome.

“Matter!” he exclaimed; “we may be surrounded by a world of troubles before to-morrow. Our private house has been plundered, Grodilla murdered, and Clarinda escaped.”

“That villain Gaspardo is the perpetrator,” cried Jerome, trembling with anger and apprehension, “and Alexo, in all probability, has betrayed us to the officers of justice. Go instantly to the Inquisition, and order search to be made after the criminals. Swear that they are heretics and forcerers; accuse them of any thing in my name, and all will be believed, and to-night I will devise means for a discovery of this damnable proceeding. Go, De Carros, immediately, and observe my directions; we stand in a perilous situation. Oh! that we had murdered Alexo ourselves. But go where I direct. Farewel; to-morrow you shall hear further upon the subject.”

They separated, and Jerome, according to custom, went to pay his morning visit to the abbess. On entering the convent parlour, he found her engaged in conversation with a nun of exquisite beauty, who was in tears. He attempted to withdraw; but Biffare hastily called him back, and exclaimed,

“ We are not talking secrets, father ; I am only assuring this vestal of my sincere regard for her welfare, and the affectionate sympathy I feel for her sufferings. She is an orphan, without the blessings of friends or fortune, and has just received a letter, acquainting her with the death of a distinguished personage, who has long patronized her, and softened her distressing situation with maternal friendship.”

A flood of tears burst from the lovely eyes of the unfortunate stranger, as Bissare uttered this fact.

“ Be advised, my love,” continued Bissare, “ to moderate your grief; consider me as your mother; your confidence shall not be abused, but, on the contrary, every indulgence, that the affection of a parent could suggest, shall be granted. A strict adherence to the severity of our religious duty shall not be enforced, nor shall the solitude of this convent afford you cause for sorrow or regret.”

She rang a bell, and desired one of the nuns to appear.

“ Here, Melissa,” said she in a whisper, “ I entrust this sister to your care; walk with her in the garden, and endeavour to persuade her that the veil is not so terrible an affliction as she supposes.”

No sooner was the door of the parlour closed, than Jerome began to make the most particular inquiries concerning the young vestal who had left it.

"She is beautiful to the highest degree," said he, "and more adapted for the brilliant circles of fashion and gaiety, than the cloisters of a convent. The beams of love darted from her eyes with such fascinating and luxurious sweetness, that I could (had I not been checked by the sanctity of my professional character) have gloried in being the devoted victim of their subduing charms."

"Fie," said Biffare, as she took the father by the hand. Can Jerome, the grave superior of St. Dominic, the public confessor of young and old, the moral lecturer of St. Catherine's, the firm supporter of our catholic faith, contaminate his ideas with the charms of woman, of a being vain, cruel, and inconstant? Can he, who punishes with unrelenting severity the advocates of iniquity, stand a confessed victim to an impure and unholy passion?"

"Unholy passion!" he exclaimed, as he lifted his eyes to heaven; and is love to be denied admission to my heart, by the cold and barbarous precepts of my profession? Can continence be deemed a virtue, when we lament, with unceasing pain, any restraint upon the liberty of our passions? My religion forbids me not to cherish in my bosom the seeds of affection; nor can I, by seclusion, suppress the wanderings of imagination. Suppose, Biffare, I should overleap all ideal barriers to my happiness,

"which by vanity and deceit have been instituted and endured, may I not hope for salvation? Reflect upon it. Is there no holy water that can wash away my crime? Can no reverend and pious father administer to me absolution?"

Bissare interrupted him—

"Jerome, if we set any value upon our moral characters, let us drop the subject; it is of the utmost importance; remember we are alone."

"Well thought of!" he exclaimed; "I will follow your advice. But I am in trouble, Bissare: our private house is plundered, and Grodilla murdered; the consequences of a discovery will be dreadful."

As they were earnestly engaged in conversation upon this subject, the convent bell began tolling for mid-day prayers. Bissare immediately veiled herself, and begging Jerome to wait her return from the chapel, left him in the parlour alone.

It was then, for the first time, that he found the united influence of commiseration and affection triumph over the almost irresistible impulse of his brutal sensuality. If the beauty of Florella had forced from him those passionate exclamations, which, in general, are the short-lived offsprings of intemperate desire, her unfortunate situation, added to her deep distress, called forth, upon mature consideration, the tenderest feelings of sympathy and compassion: but, unwilling to suffer his mind to be the pupil

of his heart, and wishing to dispel the intellectual gloom that seemed to threaten him, he rose hastily from his seat, and, opening the book case, took down an old folio, containing, amongst other things, the history of magic, and the secret systems adopted by several famous forcerers in the execution of their diabolical pursuits. When Bissare returned from the chapel, Jerome hastily concealed the book under his cloak, and observed that it treated upon a subject expressly prohibited to be made known.

"I am not unacquainted with its contents," she replied, "and have carefully concealed it from the sight of any one."

"Well," said Jerome, "I will take it; but, on your life, be secret as to its being in my possession. Farewel. I am now going to the Inquisition, to consult upon declaring, by a public memorial, that Alexo and Clarinda are heretics, and deal with the devil."

He left the convent; and as he passed along a dark avenue (wrapt in his holy weeds, and deep in thought), he perceived a man loitering under one of the towers of the prison gate. As he passed him, the stranger carefully concealed his face, and disappeared. This circumstance gave him some uneasiness; for no longer enjoying that stupor of conscience, which the villany of his heart had formerly subjected him to, he considered the most trifling incidents,

that were at all mysterious, as prophetic and ominous. His visits to the priory of St. Catherine's although continued with greater caution and reserve, were productive of consequences the most fatal he ever experienced. If he wandered in the gardens of the abbey, it was only to meet his adored Florella, and declare to her his passion; for the abbess now no longer shared his confidence and affection. He considered her as the insurmountable barrier between him and the object of his heart. Every day added fresh vigour to his increasing love for Florella. His nights were sleepless, his days spent in solitude and tears. Often would he determine to send her under a false accusation to the prison of the Inquisition: but then he exclaimed, in the height of anguish and despair,

“ Can I witness so much beauty, simplicity, and innocence, languishing in a cell, the seat of misery and distress? Oh, no! But how foolish to suffer these unceasing pangs, which her beauty has created, to prey upon my heart, to waste my hours in sorrow and reflection, when this simple pen can make her mine for ever. It must, it shall be done.”

He took his pen to write an accusation against her.—A tear dropped upon the paper—He started from his chair, and tore it to atoms.

“ I will think of her no more,” were his words, when a rap at the door of his cell

startled him with surprise. A billet was delivered to him by the porter. He read it with attention. It was from Melissa.

"The way is clear, and no time is to be lost," were the emphatic words it contained. He sought the convent gate with trembling steps, and was met in the cloisters by Melissa, who conducted him from thence to the convent parlour. As she opened the door, no language can picture his delight and astonishment; when he discovered the beautiful Florella sitting at a table; and colouring a sketch which she had drawn for an ornament to be placed above the crucifix in her cell. It was the hour when our Saviour expired upon the cross. The countenances of the jews were pictures of the most affecting terror, and so well contrasted with that calm, divine, and expressive happiness, which illumined the features of the dying martyr, that it struck Jerome insensibly with awful admiration. She rose from her seat when he entered, and was about to retire.

"Why," said the friar, "should I suffer this blessed opportunity to escape? I will declare my passion; and the alternative, if she disregards my entreaties."

He stepped after her, and detained her: She shrieked aloud.

"Repeat that again," cried the agitated monk, "and a dungeon in the Inquisition will be your fate.—Mark me, Florella, to trifle with a man under the influence of his

passions, is but to fool away your liberty—probably your life. You have represented me to the abbess in no favourable light. You must recollect that I have often said, I loved you. An opportunity so favourable as the present for retaliation, and the consummation of my wishes, must not be lost. Is it possible for you to resist the affectionate embraces of a man, whose life shall be devoted to your happiness?—Tell me that you love me, look upon me as your sincere and affectionate friend, and think not, in the zeal for order and continence, that an existence, languishing in the delusive dreams of pleasure, is preferable to realizing each delightful anticipation of the mind.”

“Villain!” she exclaimed, “is it thus that you dare profane the asylum of our holy sisterhood, by the abandoned admonitions of a libertine? If you are destitute of that purity of mind, so requisite for a confessor of our order, you become an enemy to the faith, you violate the sanctity of this convent by your presence, and deserve those punishments, so often inflicted by yourself on the innocent victims of your malice.”

She struggled violently, and disengaged herself from his grasp. Her animated remonstrance struck him so forcibly with the enormity of his conduct, that he gazed upon the tears which flowed over her lovely cheeks, with horror and remorse.

“What have I said!” he exclaimed, apparently wild with confusion and distress.

“What have I done! It was the incoherent language of a heart devoted to the conflicting passions of love and fierce desire. Forgive me, and pity my intemperate conduct.”

Unmindful of his penitence, every moment seemed to deprive her of a portion of that strength of mind, necessary to support and relieve her from such a dangerous situation; and as he was about to approach her again, she drew a miniature from her bosom, and, holding it before his eyes, exclaimed,

“This is the picture of my mother: she was the innocent victim of cruel villany and infamous depravity; and that her offended spirit may not rise from the grave, to warn me of my fate, and chide me for not resisting, to the utmost of my power, the fatal progress of an unsated and dishonourable passion, thus I revenge the insult, thus I prevent the effects of your premeditated outrage upon my person.”

She instantly drew a dagger from beneath her vest, and plunged it in his bosom.—

The friar fell; and, as he lay bleeding upon the ground, she exclaimed,

“Oh God! what have I done?”

“Fly,” said the friar, “fly instantly from the vengeance of Bissare; you have not hurt me.”

Quitting the parlour, she ran wildly through the cloisters, until she arrived at the great gate of the convent; it was just

opening, to admit a pensioner. She rushed into the street, but not unobserved by the portress. The event was immediately made known to Melissa, who dispatched a boarder after her, with instructions how to act, if she overtook her. In the meantime the abbess had entered the parlour, and found the friar bleeding on the floor.

She approached him, and, examining his wound, found the poniard had not penetrated far enough to cause any serious consequences, and that his fear only overpowered his senses.—When he had in some measure recovered from his fright, she was about to put several questions to him, respecting his situation; but the monk, who could not dissemble his fear and confusion, instantly rushed from the room, and disappeared. At that instant Melissa entered the parlour, with the intelligence that sister Florella had fled from the convent; and no one knew of her retreat. Bissare immediately recollected the great attention Jerome usually paid to that nun, and the rapturous expressions he made use of when he first saw her. These circumstances left no doubt in the abbess's mind, but that Florella was the perpetrator of the deed, to avoid, as she justly suspected, the violent and debauched purposes of the friar.

When Jerome gained his cell, it is impossible to describe the situation of his mind. It was not occasioned by the wound he had received from the hand of Florella. It was

not the reflection, that he had basely endeavoured to plunge into misery, and to sully with infamy, an innocent and friendless child. It was not because he had fixt a curse upon his soul, by disregarding, with presumptuous and blasphemous arrogance, the principles of his holy profession, and the vengeance of his God. No; it was the picture, the fatal picture, which Florella drew from her bosom, that stung him with the consciousness of his guilt, and almost hurried him to distraction. He knew it well; he knew it to be the image of his once beloved St. Anna; of her, on whom he had lavished wealth, and affection bordering upon adoration, until the birth of an unfortunate child; when he displayed the dawning principles of injustice and inhumanity, and became her inveterate persecutor; supposing by that means to secure himself from the imputation of a seducer. From the hour in which he abandoned her to the inhospitable world, no tidings respecting her fate had ever reached him. The mystery seemed explained. The tone in which Florella lamented the fate of her mother, and the picture of St. Anna being in her possession, convinced him that she was the offspring of them both. Harassed and tormented with the horrors of reflection, he about midnight left his cell, and proceeded to the convent of St. Catherine's. He there demanded to see the abbess. She had retired to rest, but was called from her cell,

and met him in the parlour. Grasping her by the hand, he exclaimed,

“ I am come, Biffare, to beg you will accompany me to the vault under our chapel, where the bodies of heretics destroyed by the Holy Inquisition moulder into dust; for I have met with circumstances of late, so strange and horrible, that the power of supernatural beings only can elucidate them. Indeed, my mind is now the seat of the most distressing and bitter reflections; lay aside those ridiculous fears, which the generality of your sex are ever prone to indulge, when the dead are in question, and go with me; for the bones of the criminals, necessary to aid the spells of Gordezmondeto, the magician, must be collected by a woman.”

“ Gracious Heaven!” said the abbess, “ I never can consent to such a proposal.— But, father, when I found you in the parlour wounded,”——

“ Peace!” cried Jerome, interrupting her; “ accompany me, or expect the fatal consequences of a refusal.”

He drew a dagger from his bosom, and, taking a lamp that was burning upon the table, with angry looks commanded Biffare to follow him.

They retired through a subterraneous pass to the chapel; and as they descended the stairs that led into the vault where the heretics were buried, the sound of voices echoed along the cavern.

"Lift!" said Jerome; "did I not hear something like the sound of human voices?"

The abbess spoke not; and they remained in perfect silence at the foot of the stairs for some time: at length the light of a torch gleamed upon the rough walls of the passage.

"Follow me," he cried; "we will soon penetrate through this mystery."

They reascended the stairs, and, secreting themselves behind a large pillar, near the spot, in a few minutes observed a man, habited as a servant to the Inquisition, ascend from the vault, bearing a torch and a spade, and who was followed by a lady in the habit of a nun without a veil.

"Away, away," said the friar to the abbess, and leave me to question this fellow concerning his prisoner.

Biffare disappeared; and Jerome advanced towards the aisle through which the strangers were passing, and exclaimed,

"Who are they, that dare to intrude themselves into this holy sanctuary at so unseasonable an hour?"

The man turned round, and, with apparent servility and fear, approached the friar, who discovered him to be the assistant gravedigger of the Inquisition, in his working dress.

"Father," he replied, "as I was digging a grave in yon vault for poor Lucas, the torturer (who, with the Virgin's assistance, is gone to heaven,) this unhappy lady's

cries pierced me to the very soul. She was in a most dreadful dungeon, without either lamp or victuals.—Who she is, or what she is, I know not; but I dare say she will readily tell you her history.”

He delivered the lady up to Jerome, and returned, whistling, to his occupation.

Bissare did not immediately quit the chapel, but remained near the spot, to satisfy her curiosity. It was impossible for her to discern who the stranger was, from the darkness of the aisles; but she guessed it to be Amantha. She followed them up the chapel, until they disappeared through a small niche in the wall, which, on searching, she found was the entrance to a passage which, she concluded, led to the monastery of St. Dominic.

As she retired from the chapel, a man, smothered in his cloak, passed hastily by her; but turning suddenly about, he followed her down the avenue, and called her by name. As his voice echoed along the vaulted passage she was pursuing, she quickened her pace; but the stranger continued to follow her, and at last he exclaimed, as she was about to quit the chapel,

“Do you fly from De Carros, Bissare?”

She instantly stopt, and, surveying his figure as he approached,

“Come presently to my cell,” said she, in a kind of whisper; “I have matters of great importance to communicate to you;

but do not follow me."—Jerome conveyed the lady to his apartments in the Inquisition, and inquired with anxious solicitude, who she was, and the cause of her confinement.

"Alas!" said she, "I know I am sadly altered; but have you so soon forgotten the devoted victim of your unjust prejudices? have you no recollection of the person whom you intended to sacrifice in the chapel of St. Dominic, but was prevented by a monk of your own order?"

He started, with confusion and surprise; and that mind, formerly so bold and active in the execution of villanous projects, became, in an instant, the prey of sorrow and remorse.

He conjured her to relate the history of her adventures since she fled from her prison in the convent of St. Catherine's.

"I did not," she replied, "leave my cell voluntarily, but one night was forcibly carried by De Carros and the abbess to the dungeon where the gravedigger found me, purposely, as I suppose, to bring me forward as a living instance of your cruelty, if ever you became the enemy of De Carros. I have subsisted almost entirely upon bread and bad wine; and the treatment I have received, from both, horrid in the extreme. That vault was their place of rendezvous for consultation; and I have, during my confinement, overheard several secret con-

versations between De Carros and Bissare; but the last particularly struck me with horror. It was a plan to murder you in a few days; and, if they succeeded, I was then to be instantly sacrificed."

At the conclusion of her narrative, his eyes flashed with indignant wrath; and, starting from his seat, he exclaimed,

"Amantha, the crime which I accused you of, in the chapel of our convent, was only a pretext for the real motives which induced me to conduct you there. The profligate Bissare, when your father quitted the capital, received from him a large sum of money for your support in the convent, during his absence; but if you did not survive his return, he gave the premium to the order. To obtain this, she determined upon your death; and, bribing me with half the sum, engaged me to perform the horrid deed."

"Thanks to my God! you are alive.—De Carros is a villain, a perfidious villain; both he and Bissare shall experience, too soon, the effect of my revenge."

He supplied the unfortunate Amantha with necessary refreshments, and medicines requisite for her recovery, together with linen and female attendance, and the next day gave her the liberty to enter again the convent of St. Catherine's.

De Carros went, after leaving Bissare at the chapel door, to carry his prisoner her daily food. He found the gravedigger at work,

and returned, without proceeding to the dungeon.

When he arrived at the cell of Bissare, according to her injunction in the chapel,

"My God! De Carros," she exclaimed, "last night I accompanied Jerome, by force, to the dungeon where the heretics are buried, to collect ingredients for a charm."—

"A charm!"——

"Listen!——I trembled for the consequences, knowing that Amantha was confined at the extremity of the vault. I hesitated to proceed. He menaced me with death. At that instant a strong light flashed at intervals, upon the broken walls of the passage. The sound of voices succeeded. I had nearly sunk upon the ground with terror. He hurled me from the vault, and desired me to leave him. I did so; but secreted myself in the aisle, and observed him take a female by the hand, who ascended from the vault in company with a gravedigger. I approached nearer towards them; she at that moment accidentally turned her head, and by the glimmering of the torch I discovered the features of Amantha."

"Hell and fury! How often have I urged the propriety and necessity of dispatching her! What is to be done? We are lost for ever!"

"Not so," replied Bissare: "let us complete our intention of murdering him to night."

“ It cannot be effected.”

Biffare’s eyes flashed with contempt and indignation, as she exclaimed, “ Do you hesitate to perpetrate a deed that is absolutely necessary to be done for the salvation of us both? You, or Jerome, must fall; inevitable destruction awaits one of you.”

“ Meet me to night in the solitudes of the garden, and we will consider of it.”

“ Delay it not, upon your life,” she cried, with impetuous anger. “ Recollect the authority of an Inquisitor; recollect the temper of Jerome. Amantha has by this time discovered enough to condemn us to the rack. To night, at the hour of twelve, expect me at your cell. I will give three distinct raps at the door. The dagger I shall provide for the purpose will not be stained with blood for the first time; and if your courage is unequal to so mighty a task, I will do it. Absolution washes away every stain from the soul. Farewel.”

“ But a moment, Biffare,” said De Carros, “ stop, and hear what I have to say.”

The abbess left him with great precipitation, and the monk returned to his cell in deep reflection. He retired early to rest, under pretence of sickness; and, as he lay musing upon his couch, he heard the clock strike eleven.

“ One hour more,” he cried, “ and the soul of the abandoned Jerome will stand before its God, crimsoned with the blood of innocence, and shrouded in the most pro-

fligate and detestable crimes. It will be plunged"—

A loud rap at the door of his cell disturbed his soliloquy.

"Who is there?" he cried, rising from his bed.

"Father Ambrose," said a voice, "with a message from Jerome, who lies ill in bed, and wishes to commune with you."

He drew back the bolts of the door, to admit the pretended Ambrose, and was immediately seized by four men in masks, who, rushing into the room, wrapped him in a long black cloak, and carried him immediately to the prison of the Inquisition.

The hour of twelve approached; and Biffare, after having armed herself with a poniard, left her cell, and proceeded, without delay, to find De Carros. She entered the monastery through the private doer-way in the garden. Having determined in her own mind to have Jerome murdered that night, and fearful De Carros might urge the propriety of delay, she remained in the cloisters until the clock struck the fatal hour appointed for the purpose, when she immediately hastened to his cell, and rapped three times distinctly at the door.

"Who is there?" exclaimed a voice within.

She spoke not, but repeated the signal.—The door opened half way, and closed again.

“ De Carres,” she exclaimed, “ it is Bif-fare; the clock has struck twelve.”

Immediately two men rushed from the cell, and seizing the abbess, regardless of her cries and entreaties, hurried her into a dungeon, beneath the chapel.

She lay for some time senseless on the ground; but, roused by the grating of the heavy bolts without the door, she looked up and beheld Jerome in his inquisitorial robes, standing before her. By his countenance she observed that the severest pangs of horror and revenge were master of his heart.

“ Rise, fiend of hell!” he exclaimed, “ and follow me.”

He conducted her through several winding passages to an outlet into the garden, and from thence to a coach that was waiting for them at a wicket. It drove furiously to the Inquisition. She passed through the gloomy courts of this terrible prison, not without feeling the dreadful horror of her situation. Tapers, placed here and there, illumined, with their sepulchral rays, the dark and unshapen walls of the passages she passed through; and until she entered a room, the tapestry of which was stained with spots of blood, she knew not whither she was going. The tribunal covered with red, the various modes and instruments of torture that were displayed in needle work upon the canvass, the gloomy and savage appearance of her conductor, sufficiently

convinced her of Jerome's intention. She sunk upon the floor in despair. A sudden noise at a small door, which apparently led into a closet, caused her to rise from the ground, and she observed her guard extinguishing the small tapers that flamed in different parts of the apartment. Immediately afterwards, Jerome entered the room, attended by two other Inquisitors, and a man bearing a lamp. Some few minutes after they had appeared, De Carros entered the apartment, conducted by two torturers, and heavily ironed.

An awful silence prevailed. The culprits looked on each other with signs of guilt and terror. Jerome ordered a torturer to advance.

"Strike upon that bell," he cried, pointing to one that stood upon the ground near him.

At the sound, a small door on the right hand side of the tribunal opened, and Amanda entered the room, clothed in the habit which she wore during her confinement in the dungeon.

"Look upon her, De Carros," said Jerome. "Look upon her. Is she not Amanda? Wretch! is she not a victim of your unpardonable villany? Have you any thing to say, that will controvert the fact?"

"There is a man, whose name is Alexo"—

"Speak not of him," cried Jerome, as he started from his chair. "Speak not of a man, whose heretical opinions condemn

him to fly from the vengeance of this holy tribunal, this sacred institution, this divine instrument of punishment; but bring forward those who reverence our religion and authority.—Amantha, behold your barbarous persecutor at the bar of justice. Behold him expiate his crime with death.”

The torturer presented him with a small goblet.

“ Drink,” continued Jerome, “ to the salvation of your perjured soul. Be quick.”

He hesitated, and was about to speak; when a ruffian immediately struck him a violent blow on the breast, and pointed to the goblet.

“ Is there so much to fear, De Carros, that you thus remain, trembling upon the brink of eternity? Weep not, hypocrite; but take the draught: time is swift of foot. Drink it, I say.”

A sudden boldness of spirit seized the unfortunate man, and he swallowed the fatal draught; which, within the space of a few minutes, threw him into convulsions, and caused him to expire in the greatest agonies.

As his body lay upon the ground, Jerome addressed himself to Bissare.

“ You are implicated in the crime which doomed De Carros to suffer the punishment of death; but, for private reasons, I resign you to these my superiors; their judgment will be the guide of mine, as to the punishment you deserve.”

He immediately quitted the room with Amantha, leaving Biffare to the mercy of his brother Inquisitors.

No examination of evidence, to support the charge alleged against her by Jerome, took place; no attention was paid to the defence she made before them: but the judges of the most holy and divine tribunal immediately condemned her to be starved to death in a dungeon, where the body of De Carros was also ordered to be buried. The sentence was to be put in execution that night; but no one knew of the poniard Biffare had armed herself with, to dispatch Jerome; and, before she left the tribunal, raising her eyes to heaven, she muttered an incoherent passage from a book which she held in her hand, and, plunging the dagger in her bosom, sunk at the feet of the Inquisitors.

Jerome entered the apartment, as she was expiring. When he approached her, she uttered a faint shriek, and taking, with much difficulty, a paper from her bosom, delivered it to the man who was raising her from the ground. Jerome instantly snatched it from his hand, and tore it into a thousand pieces.

"The dead," he cried, "can speak ill of no one. Convey the body to the burying ground, and inter it before day-light appears."

The Inquisitors were thunderstruck with his conduct; but, to question a brother's

right of usurpation, would have dissolved that union of sentiment, so necessary to be respected amongst men, when villainy is encouraged by them, in all its hellish and horrible designs: they therefore separated with great cordiality, and Jerome returned to his convent, apparently fully satisfied with his conduct. Although the matin bell was tolling as he entered his cell, he immediately retired to rest.—The murdered Bissare stood before him in his dreams, and the ghastly spectre of De Carros pointed to the jaws of hell, which seemed ready to receive him. He took absolution in the morning, and then felt himself at liberty to continue his professional hypocrisies with as much zeal as he had done previous to that summary mode of freeing himself from guilt and iniquity.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ ’Tis policy and stratagem must do
 What you affect; and so must you resolve:
 That what you cannot, as you would, atchieve,
 You must perforce accomplish as you may.”

TITUS ANDRONICUS.

IN the first Chapter of this work mention has been made of the initiation of Alexo into the monastery of St. Dominic. After that ceremony was performed, the perfidious Roderigo retired to a castle in his possession, and which was situated in

New Castile. A cavalier, apparently of distinction, was soon after received into his family; but no person in the household, except Roderigo, knew any thing concerning him, or the object of his visit. He generally devoted his evenings to contemplation in the solitudes of the gardens which belonged to the castle, or in some silent walks that were contiguous to a ruinous chapel, at no great distance from the walls of the edifice. He played exquisitely upon the flute, and was a poet. The following Ode was written by him, as he sat sequestered in those gloomy solitudes, musing upon past events.

O D E

T O C O N T E M P L A T I O N .

NOW ev'ning dim appears—that much-lov'd hour
Of sweet tranquillity and rural ease:

When far afield is heard
The ploughman's simple song;

And from the bean-field sings the lab'ring bee,
Warn'd homeward by the coming shades of night,

And dews that gently fall
On ev'ry drooping flow'r.

With Contemplation let me seek to dwell,

In wild romantic vale, or ruin dark,

Where the swift-circling bat

Flits in the twilight way.

And oft, in sheep-cote near, the pleasing sound

Of warning-bell is heard; as Philomel,

In Echo's mournful haunts,

Sings her sad tale of woe.

Or if by musing mem'ry fondly led

To poor Matilda's turf of fading flowers,

Meet me in holy guise,
O, Maid! rever'd by those

Who love to shed affection's hallow'd tears,
Unmark'd at night, when through the fleecy clouds,
That veil her azure sphere,
The wan moon dimly shines.

But when drear Winter saddens all the plain,
And by the cheerful fire, at close of day,
I hear the bleak winds mourn,
Around my reed-thatcht hut;

The muse my lonely hours shall oft beguile:
And thou, sweet Maid, the willing mind shalt store
With pity, meek content,
And friendship's sacred law.

As night appears, big with the wintry storm,
Then shall the glimm'ring lamp, with cheering ray,
Beam o'er the neighb'ring plain,
Or mountain's lonely side:

For oft poor travellers benighted stray,
Wide of the village path, at that dark hour,
When not a watch dog barks,
Or distant sheep bell sounds,

Or, ling'ring onward, fear the chasm's depth,
Conceal'd by drifted snow; as the cold blast
Howls through the leafless thorn,
And windings of the steep.

One evening, as he was returning to the castle from his solitary retirement, a girl, apparently the daughter of a cottager, delivered him a billet, which contained the following mysterious admonition.

"Put no confidence in Roderigo's friendship: he is a villain. If you watch in the gallery of the great hall when the clock strikes two, something may probably happen, to confirm my assertion."

He ordered a fire that night to be lighted

in his chamber, and retired early to rest. His books alone afforded him amusement until midnight, when he laid down upon his couch, and fell into a light sleep. The clock was striking two as he awoke. He armed himself with a dagger, and proceeded to the gallery that looked into the great hall. A solemn stillness reigned in every part of the castle. As he descended into the hall, the glimmering of a light at the upper end of the gallery revived his hopes of discovering something of importance.

The light continued to approach. He cautiously ascended the stairs, and discovered old Dorinda, the housekeeper, enter the mysterious chamber with a basket upon her left arm, and which was apparently filled with provisions. His curiosity prompted him to follow her; for, as no person but Roderigo and the confessor were ever permitted to enter that room, he felt an unusual degree of anxiety to discover the secret of the chamber. He listened at the door, which was left ajar; and concluded, from the stillness which prevailed in the chamber, that he might enter it with safety. He gradually opened the door, and by the faint light of the morning, which shone through the window, he perceived the floor in many places crimsoned with blood, and that the bed curtains and furniture, although fallen into total decay, exhibited the same marks of cruel villany. The secret was now discovered

covered. The scene before him sufficiently proved how far it would be prudent in him to remain a domestic of a castle, the retreat of murderous adventurers, and which, in all probability, would one day become his grave. He was about to quit the room, when a beam of light darted through a crevice in a door at the upper end. He daringly approached, and, opening it, found it led into a small passage, which communicated with one of the strong towers that were built for the protection of the castle. Incautious in his inquiries, he ventured into the passage, and had nearly been discovered by Dorinda, whom he accidentally observed at the extremity, fastening a strong iron door. As she held her lamp up, to observe whether she had secured it effectually, he suddenly quitted the apartment, and, reaching his chamber in safety, sat down upon his couch, overpowered with horror, and the tormenting pangs of reflection. Roderigo's character he had, since his residence in the castle, found out by his domestics not to be of the first consequence in the estimation of mankind; the dreadful appearance of the chamber now confirmed his suspicions.

"But the basket, which old Dorinda carried, could not," he exclaimed, "contain any thing for the service of the dead."

He paced the room in wild disorder, his mind harassed with the strange and unaccountable adventure he had met with, until

the broad day light illumed the neighbouring promontories round the castle. He retired to rest, and rose late in the day. Suspecting him to be indisposed, Roderigo visited him in his chamber; but his mind was too deeply affected with the circumstances he had met with, to engage in conversation with a man, whom he suspected to be the villanous promoter of murder and oppression.

He resolved, after some deliberation, to force from Dorinda, the secret of the tower; and, as the clock struck twelve, he exclaimed,

“ Two hours more must pass, and I will then, at the hazard of my life, discover the truth of my suspicions.”

A voice at that instant cried out,

“ Beware!”

He started from his seat, and, seizing a dagger which he had unsheathed, and laid upon the table, looked fearfully around the apartment; it was gloomy, and free from any being but himself. The peasants of the neighbouring village had frequently told him that spirits had been seen in the castle, by Conrad, the porter, who usually took laudanum, to prevent those dreadful wanderers of the night from terrifying him into fits. His credulity, like poor Conrad's, almost got the better of philosophy; for every noise increased the alarm which had at first nearly overpowered him; and the cheerful

blaze of a good fire alone kept him from sinking into a state of melancholy horror. The clock at length struck two; when, regardless of the supernatural warning he had heard, he extinguished his lamp, and proceeded to the great gallery, as before. The tranquil light of the morning, which, the preceding night, illumined, as if by design, the gloomy chamber of iniquity, was now obscured by clouds, dark and big with storms. He waited for the old housekeeper a full hour in the gallery; but every thing continued buried in the same death-like stillness. He stationed himself opposite the door of the mysterious chamber; but no sound whatever disturbed his reflections.— A violent storm soon after broke over the battlements of the castle. It shattered the summit of the north tower. The falling of the fragments awoke Roderigo, who slept in an adjoining chamber; and, ere the cavalier could possibly reach his apartment, he was met by the villain, who was dressed in his night gown, and carried in his right hand a naked sword. He held his lamp up, as he approached the cavalier, and exclaimed,

“ How now! Does this awful thunder appal your spirits as well as mine? I have not rested well these three nights. Have you been with the confessor? If not return with me to him; he will be of service to us.”

He started, as if suddenly recollecting

some important circumstance; and, turning to the cavalier with a yawning smile,

“ I have not,” said he, “ recovered a jovial carousal, which I had about three days ago with a traveller who stopt at the castle, and must have my sleep up; the storm may continue, if it please the disposer of it. I make no doubt you have often felt the dreadful sensations which naturally affect a nervous man, roused from slumber by a thunder storm, and the consequent languid depressions that follow his recovery. I am ill at this moment with them, and must wish you a good night.”

The first impressions of terror, which seized the cavalier when he saw Roderigo, had now subsided; but, fearful his continuing long in the gallery might lead to some suspicion, he parted with him at the door of his chamber. The peculiar language of Roderigo, his method of address, and appearance, awakened in the bosom of his guest the sure conviction of his guilt. The prospect of an escape began now to occupy his attention. His suspicions were too well founded, of Roderigo's having set spies to watch his conduct; for he never left the castle without observing some one of the household following him; and to effect his escape, without the knowledge of Roderigo, he thought almost impossible. One night, however, made desperate by his reflections, he left his chamber, with the positive in-

tention of murdering old Conrad, the porter, as the only means of gaining his liberty. As he passed along the gallery, the door of the mysterious chamber, he observed, was open as before. Regardless of the sudden trembling which instantly seized him, he entered the apartment, and, finding his way to the iron door, he descended a rough stone stair case into a passage, which he traversed with great dread and difficulty; until he observed some person before him, with a lamp. It was old Dorinda. He carefully observed her conduct; and, when she had gained the extremity of the passage, he saw, as she placed her basket on the ground, that it contained a small wine flask, a loaf of bread, and some fruit. She ascended a few steps, and unlocked a small door; and, as she threw it wide open, he discovered, during the time she descended for her basket, a female figure, with her eyes fixed upon the pages of a small book, which she held in her hand. The old beldam closed the door, when she entered the apartment; and he then approached near enough to hear his name mentioned, with a deep and affectionate sigh. Maddened with surprise and horror, he, in the first moments of his agitation, was about to rush into the apartment; when the door creaked upon its hinges, and Dorinda re-appeared. He fled swiftly from the spot, and, secreting himself in an aperture of the wall, heard her mutter, as she passed by him,

“ Love, indeed! the devil fetch me, if she shall ever see him, without it serves my purpose too.”

In a few minutes the passage was in total darkness. He found his way to the cell, and rapped at the door.

“ Who is there?” exclaimed some person, with a feeble voice.

He was unable to reply. There was something in the tone of it, that reminded him of his lost and beloved Cleanthe. He waited a few minutes, and rapped again,

“ Cleanthe!”

A loud shriek pierced him to the very soul.—A dreadful pause of some moments ensued.—He listened at the door, and heard some one burst into tears.

“ I cannot,” said he “ possibly enter your prison; but tell me who thou art, and justice shall force the cause of your confinement to be explained by the master of this abominable haunt of villany.”

“ Am I deceived,” she replied, “ if I call upon my affectionate, my long lost love, Bertram, to commiserate, and endeavour to relieve, the barbarous treatment his Cleanthe endures in this horrid prison?”

“ Almighty God! It cannot be. Is it possible that my Cleanthe lives?”

“ It is. It is, my Bertram!” she exclaimed, with the wildest cries of horror.

He listened at the door.—A groan only, at intervals, disturbed the solemn silence of her prison. Suspecting she had fainted, he

ran, raging with despair, up the passage, uttering the loudest imprecations against Roderigo, and praying for the interference of God.—A light shone upon the distant walls of the place.

“They are coming,” he cried, as he dashed himself against the door of the prison; “they are coming, to drag me from my love. Cleanse, your barbarous persecutors approach. I shall meet death, as the angel of eternal happiness, if you do not survive me.”

She groaned, as if expiring.

“Thanks to my God! that groan was the sign of death. We shall soon meet in heaven.”

He threw himself on the ground, and laid for some time in a state of insensibility. In the interim Dorinda arrived.

“A man!” she cried, “and dead too. Holy father! who can it be? Oh Lord! it is the cavalier who resides in the castle. Poor gentleman; his hands are as cold as the paws of a dead bear. Truly, this will be a pretty tale for Roderigo. How I shall be cuffed about for a month, if he knows that he died in this place; and how, in the name of sin and misery, shall I be able to carry him away?”

She tried the salutary effect of fanning him with her mantle. He gradually recovered; and, when he perceived the benevolent portress of the prison standing by his

side, he rose in fury from the ground, and, darting upon the hag, exclaimed,

“ Ah! miscreant, you are now at my mercy; give me instantly the key of that dungeon, or I will sacrifice you directly to my fury.”

“ Merciful father! how you gripe me! Let me tell you, Sir Bertram, I cannot do it.”

“ Not do it!”

“ Sir Bertram, Sir Bertram, recollect my situation; a poor, helpless woman, debased with deformity; and, if Roderigo should kick me out of the castle, pray, where am I to find a comforter?—I cannot do it; indeed, Sir Bertram, I cannot do it.”

She was retiring—

“ You stir not from this place,” he cried, “ until my request is complied with.—Trifle with me no longer; for, by the God above, I will murder you, if you persist in refusing me admittance to my beloved Cleanthe!”

“ Your beloved Cleanthe,” said the old beldam, with a snile.

Bertram interrupted her—

“ Here is a ring of inestimable value; take it: be my friend, and all the wealth I am master of shall be yours.”

Many people know the real properties of gold. Dorinda was one of these connoisseurs. She produced the key, and threw open the door of a dungeon.

"I will return," said she, "when I think it is time for you to leave the cell."

What mind can conceive, what language express, the distressed situation of Bertram, when he beheld his beloved Cleanthe stretched senseless on the floor! He knelt by her side, and gazed upon her, in speechless horror. He observed her bosom violently agitated. It was the effect of returning animation; but to him it appeared the convulsive struggles of the departing soul.

"She cannot live," he exclaimed, falling on her neck. "She cannot live. But we will be buried in one grave, that our dust may be united in the tomb."

As he poised the dagger at his breast, she faintly exclaimed,

"Forbear! I live."

He dropped the poniard on the ground, and raised her to his arms. She reclined her head upon his neck, and burst into tears. The effect of agonizing sorrow overpowered the faculty of speech. They continued for some time in this situation, until Bertram, pressing her to his bosom, exclaimed,

"Have you no suspicion of the cause which condemns you to confinement in this horrible place?"

"Oh! I am too well acquainted with the motive that induces my villanous persecutor to keep me in his power. Since that fatal night, in which you quitted Ma-

drid for Andalusia, I have been the victim of the most abandoned cruelties."

Here she related to him her unjust confinement in the prison of the Inquisition, by Jerome, father of the order of St. Dominic.

"This castle," she continued, "is the property of a villain, under the influence of that Inquisitor. For, when I first came here, I was treated with great respect; but on the arrival of a horseman, who brought letters for the master of the castle, I was thrown into this dungeon. I had received a wound in my left breast from the hand of Jerome, as I resisted his brutal violence on my person. The dampness of the dungeon increased an inflammation which had taken place; and, fearful it might endanger my life, I compelled Dorinda, by tears and entreaties, to represent my situation to her master. She did so; and I was instantly removed to a small room in one of the towers. His confessor there attended me with medicines, and every thing necessary for my comfort; and, when he reported me sufficiently recovered, I was again sent back to this place, where I have borne a long and unjust confinement, without the hope of ever regaining my liberty."

"Do not despair," cried Bertram. "We may possibly soon effect it; for I will to-morrow go to Madrid, and lay the whole affair before the great officers of the law. They cannot refuse me their assistance, to

bring this barbarous libertine and his confederates to justice. God only knows the extent of my extreme distress, when I returned to Madrid, and found your house totally deserted. I searched every street in the metropolis; I employed friends to make inquiries in the neighbouring provinces; I ranged through the suburbs of the city, as one distracted. No person that dwelt near you had heard of your departure, until I mentioned it. I gave myself up to despair, and the pressure of my misfortunes soon reduced me to the necessity of keeping my bed. Suspecting my father to be unacquainted with my arrival, and hoping an opportunity, so favourable for a reconciliation, would not be treated by him with contempt, I dispatched a servant to his house, with the information of my indisposition, and a pressing request that he would visit me. He returned, with an answer from my father's banker, that he had, soon after the decease of my mother, initiated my sister into the convent of St. Catherine's, and retired into a distant country. This unexpected evil added to my misfortunes the dreadful malady of melancholy. My physicians then advised me to retire into the country, and unbend the mind from reflection, by the diversions it afforded; their advice was so powerfully seconded by my confessor, (and who, from certain mysterious circumstances which I remarked in his behaviour, must be the very same friar,

whose villany you have experienced) that I consented to adopt the proposal. Roderigo was introduced to me by the friar, as a gentleman of birth, fortune, and education, and who, he said, would willingly admit me into his castle (which was situated in the mountainous part of Estremadura, and well calculated for a temporary retirement,) for the sake of society. We (I observed, to the great joy of the friar) became friends; and, previous to my departure from Madrid, I called at the grate of St. Catherine's convent, and inquired for my sister. The abbess, informed of my arrival came to the grate, and told me she had been dead many months. I requested to see her tomb.

"No man ever enters these walls," she replied, and, bidding me farewell, closed the door of the grating in my face. The situation of my mind, at that moment, cannot be conceived. I returned to Roderigo's lodgings, and relating my adventure to him, in the most impressive terms begged that we might instantly quit the capital: But sure, some angel, that ever watches over the fate of the unfortunate, must have befriended me, to have so fortunately discovered your retreat."

They were interrupted by a rap at the door. Dorinda entered the cell—

"It is almost high morning," she exclaimed, "and, ere long, Roderigo will be

stirring. The keys of the private places in the castle I always deliver to him the first thing: therefore you must separate now."

"Do not tear us asunder so soon, Dorinda," said Bertram. "Leave me here until you return at midnight."

"By the father of the virgin!" replied the hag, "that will betray us to Roderigo, and then, Sir Bertram, you will be shut up in a prison, and I shall be minced alive for the hungry owls in his garden. No, no! you must part now; but I promise to conduct you here again at twelve to-night."

They embraced each other with affectionate rapture, and, after returning a thousand hallowed kisses, bade adieu, until the hour appointed by Dorinda for their next meeting.

Bertram and the old woman hurried from the passage, and parted at the door of his chamber. He laid down upon his couch, and tried to refresh himself by repose; but in vain. If he slumbered at all, Cleanthe stood before him in her shroud; and, if he mused upon his pillow, visionary murderers glided before his eyes. He spent the greater part of the day amongst the ruins, or in the most private avenues of the garden. The pleasing hopes of restoring Cleanthe to liberty, alone occupied his thoughts. The strength of the castle, and the attachment of the domestics to their master, were disadvantages which he could not easily overcome; but he did not despair. Dorinda's

conduct added fresh vigour to his hopes; and, early in the evening, he retired to his chamber, and passed away the hours in reading the poetry and romances of Voltaire. The castle bell tolled eleven.

"I would that it were twelve!" he exclaimed, as he threw down his book, and opened the window of his chamber. The moon was just rising above the mountains, and, in the midst of his contemplations, he heard his chamber door open. On turning hastily, as he thought to welcome Dorinda, a man in complete armour approached him, and, waving his truncheon for silence, repeated with marked emphasis the following lines:

"Unsuspecting youth, beware!
Trust not woman, but with care:
Perfidy and murder wait
Attendant on thy settled fate.
Prize the stranger, prize the hour,
That warns thee of a villain's power."

Immediately the unknown disappeared. He rushed into the gallery with his lamp, but no person was to be seen. The voice which he had heard in his chamber, and the appearance of the man in armour, almost deterred him from accompanying Dorinda that night to the prison; but in the midst of his deliberations she rapped at his door—

"We must lose no time," she cried; "follow me directly."—

The idea of again beholding his adored

Cleanthe instantly overcame every difficulty which had arisen in his mind, respecting his safety, and he joyfully accompanied the old woman to the dungeon. She gradually unlocked the door; and, when he rushed into the room, his terror and astonishment are more easily to be conceived than described; for he beheld Roderigo with three of his confederates waiting his approach.

“ Ah, villain!” he exclaimed, on seeing Bertram, “ your conduct shall be rewarded as it deserves.”

They seized him, and loaded him with irons; and in a few minutes afterwards the lamp was extinguished, and they left him in the dungeon, raving with indignant fury and resentment.

At the lower part of the cell was a grating which looked into a subterraneous passage; and one night as he lay stretched upon the floor, almost senseless with grief and despair, he heard some person exhorting him to patience and courage. He approached the aperture, and discovered it to be a domestic of Roderigo's, whom he had usually employed as his own servant, from motives of humanity, the man being old and past the laborious duty of a menial servant.

“ Had you, Sir Bertram,” he cried, “ but obeyed my injunctions, all would have been well. I tried to warn you of your situation, by secreting myself in your chamber: I found it did not succeed, and took an opportunity of appearing before you in ar-

mour for the same purpose ; but all would not do."

"And was it you," replied Bertram, "that so advisedly foreboded the fatal consequences, of trusting myself in Dorinda's power? Had you but laid aside your mysterious habit, I should have attended to you, and been happy."

"Oh, my dear master! I thought you would believe a ghost, sooner than a superannuated old servant. Lord! one should have supposed the blood in the chamber you passed through, to get to the dungeon, would have frightened you out of your opinion. They say that Roderigo's sister haunts that chamber. Dear heart! this is a sad place."

"Oh, Gordez! torture me no more with such terrible and alarming tales; but tell me if you know of my Cleanthe, and whether you can assist me to escape from the power of this villain, Roderigo?"

"Oh, dear heart! Cleanthe, poor dear, is confined in a dungeon, darker and more dismal than this, and no one person knows where it is, but that old deceitful devil, Dorinda, and Roderigo. And as for your escaping, by all the dead prophets!"—

"Hark!" cried Bertram, "I hear footsteps in the passage. Fly instantly, or you will be detected."

He threw a billet into his prison, and disappeared. Bertram had just sufficient

time to conceal it in his bosom, when the door opened, and four men entered his dungeon.

His irons were immediately taken off by one of them, who seemed to be the leader; and, in spite of his curses and supplications, they bound him with cords, and threatening him with death if he continued his imprecations, conducted him into the courtyard of the castle. He there observed three horses and a small carriage in waiting near the gate; and, whilst preparations were making by the men for their departure, Roderigo appeared at a window in one of the towers, holding Cleanthe in his arms—

“Thus,” he exclaimed, “I punish hypocrisy,” and apparently stabbed her to the heart.

Bertram at that moment felt the most unspeakable pangs of horror. He struggled to free himself from the power of his conductors, but in vain. They hurried him into the carriage, and, quitting the castle, struck into a wild path-way over the mountains, with their unfortunate and miserable prisoner.

The castle gates were scarce closed for the night, when Roderigo was awakened by a loud rapping at the outer gate. He summoned the porter to his chamber, and, inquiring the cause of the disturbance, received for answer, that one of the men, who had the care of Bertram, was returned, and requested to see him instantly.

The fellow was admitted. Along and secret conference took place.—

“Are you sure of it?” cried Roderigo.

“I know them well,” said the servant.

“Order wine and provisions to be set before them,” said he, “and desire the confessor to attend upon them until my appearance.”

He turned to his *escrutoir*, and took some papers from a small red leather case, and examined them with profound attention.—

“These are certainly,” he cried, “from this description of Jerome’s, the persons whom he most wishes to destroy. And, by the fellow’s account, my nephew is amongst them. They shall not see the dawn of to-morrow. No, it shall be done to-night.”

It was the unfortunate Don Alphonso and his party, who, from a pressing desire to reach the capital without the least delay, had entered upon the mountains too late in the evening to cross them before morning; and, having accidentally met the gang, conducting Bertram on his journey, politely inquired of them their nearest way to the first village; but were answered, that it was nine leagues distant. The man mentioned the castle of Roderigo, as being inhabited by Augustine friars, and faithfully promised to conduct them to it without harm or hazard. They knew the benevolent inhabitants of religious houses usually lodged travellers for the night with great hospitality;

and, not feeling themselves very much disposed to pursue their journey, they desired the man to lead the way, promising him a reward, if he proved worthy of it.

As they were conversing upon different topics, with much gaiety and pleasure, the confessor, who was seated at the top of the table, suddenly feigned sickness, and disappeared. No person of the household, after that moment, they thought would appear in the hall again; for they constantly heard people hastily passing up and down the stairs, doors opening and shutting in the galleries, and, at intervals, loud imprecations, seemingly uttered by men in the execution of some important charge.

"I fear," said Alphonso, "that we have fooled our lives away; these unusual and inhospitable circumstances lead me to suspect this castle to be the secret haunt of villany."

At that moment they heard several voices chanting a beautiful chorus of an hymn. Alphonso laid his sword upon the table, and, climbing up to one of the windows which opened into the garden, observed, with a great degree of astonishment, six men, accompanying a woman who was arrayed in white. She carried in her right hand a wax taper, and in her left, a tablet, on which he indistinctly discerned figures in different attitudes, carved above a long inscription. They approached the castle, and entered one of the towers.

He had scarce time to communicate this strange and mysterious ceremony to his friends, when the large folding doors were thrown open, and the procession entered the hall, preceded by the confessor. The lady approached Clarinda, and, taking her by the hand, presented her to a fat friar, who introduced her to the next, and he to the third, and so on, until she had received the holy salutation from the whole company. The same mode of etiquette was also observed to Alphonso and his friends. This unaccountable farce completed, the tablet was presented to Alphonso, who read aloud the following words, which were engraved under the emblematical figures of Faith, Hope, and Charity:

“ The Augustine friars, who inhabit this castle, are devoted to religion, and the faithful discharge of their duty towards their fellow creatures. The poor are at the gate of their sanctuary supplied with food and raiment, the rich receive their benediction, and the bewildered traveller an hospitable reception, until he wishes to depart on his journey.”

The procession returned from the hall the way it came, and immediately lamps were brought in by two female servants, and the party conducted to separate chambers. This holy ceremony ill accorded with the blasphemous expressions they had heard uttered in the gallery. Suspicion was now completely awakened in the minds of Alexo,

Jacques, and Don Bertram; and, as they were retiring to their respective couches, Alexo observed a paper slip under the door of the chamber. He took it up and read it to his friends: it contained the following words:

“Open the door, and admit a man who is your friend; *he* has something of importance to communicate.”

They consulted upon the propriety of such a step, conceiving that a party of banditti might rush in, and put them to death without mercy. The man rapped gently, and exclaimed,

“Admit me; on my life, I am your friend.”

This circumstance determined them to see the stranger who requested so extraordinary a measure. It was a man wrapped in a foldier’s cloak; and when he entered the chamber, pulling his hat from his brow, he exclaimed,

“Have you no recollection, Alexo, of the man who introduced you to the jew at Madrid, as tutor to his son?”

“My God! is it Pedro?—Then mischief is at hand.”

“Not quite so bad as that, Sir. To be sure, I once played you a knave’s trick; but I am now your friend. The man who inhabits this castle is your uncle.”

“Gracious God!”—

“Hear me. The fellow who conducted

you here is Gaspardo, well known to you all, I have no doubt."

The party surrounded him.

"Hark!"—He stepped softly to the door, and secured it.

"Roderigo's title to this domain is written with blood. Deeds of the most horrid nature have been committed within these walls, by those villains whom you saw in religious clothing. I have a knowledge of many private passages in the castle, that lead into a ruinous chapel at some distance from the walls. One of them communicates with Alphonso's chamber. We must not trifle away our time; for if you do not quit the castle this night, you are totally lost."

"How are we to reach the chamber of Alphonso, unobserved," said Alexo.

"Follow me; all the inhabitants are, at this moment, watching upon the towers, for the approach of several of their companions, whom, it is supposed, are overtaken by a band of armed peasants."

They quitted the chamber, and proceeding to the room where Alphonso slept, with utter astonishment and horror, perceived it secured by a padlock on the outside. Observing, however, through a crevice, that his lamp was burning, they immediately apprized him of his situation, and promised, if no accident happened to them, to come by a private way to his chamber.

"Now," said Pedro, "we must make a

desperate effort, and gain the holy tower. We can from thence get into Alphonso's chamber."

As they followed him along the gallery, they could distinctly perceive lights upon the towers thro' the windows of the hall, and observed, with great joy, the old porter and Dorinda fast asleep before the fire.

"All is well," cried Pedro: "the two guards are safe. In a few minutes we shall be out of danger."

They descended a flight of steps at the end of the gallery, which led into a room that communicated with the tower. They then explored their way, in total darkness, through a winding passage, to a small door at the summit of about thirty steps. Pedro rapped rather loud, and called out, "Alphonso."

He answered, and inquired how he was to be delivered from his perilous situation.

"You will find," said Pedro, "a small door immediately behind that part of the arras where you see St. John's head on a charger."

He had scarce spoken these words, when they perceived the light shine under the door. Pedro instantaneously unlocked it, by means of the housekeeper's key, which he had stolen from her whilst plying her with the best wine in the cellar. They took the almost expiring Clarinda in their arms, and following Pedro through several subterraneous passages, arrived, without

discovery, at the outlet. As the morning was on the point of breaking, Pedro, when they entered the ruins, extinguished the lamp. He then desired them, with a peculiar degree of earnestness, not to stir from the spot until his return.

"Return!" said Alphonso: "what! do you mean to desert us?"

"No, no; the mules, I expect, are ready saddled in an adjoining valley. A confidential friend is stationed there with them, but, for what purpose, he knows not."

After repeated assurances of his fidelity, they suffered him to depart. During his absence those tedious moments were wasted by the travellers with a degree of dreadful apprehension; for Pedro's character was well known to Alexo, and his solemn protestation of friendship and integrity appeared to him only as a veil to cover his rascality. Their fears, however, were soon dissipated; for the fellow arrived punctually to his time, with three mules equipped for a journey. They instantly mounted the animals, and, in a few minutes, gained an open plain. As they rode furiously along the waste, they observed the light of torches continually flashing through the windows of the chambers and towers of the castle.

"We have just escaped it;" cried Pedro; "the storm is brewing; lights appear every where in the castle: this way, gentlemen, this way."

He struck into a beaten path-way, which they found led to the high road. The village steeple soon appeared; and, before the sun had risen above the summit of the mountains, they alighted at a small inn, near the entrance of the hamlet.

They continued there but a sufficient time to refresh the beasts and themselves, when they hired a vehicle, and proceeded with all possible dispatch to Madrid.

They had, in their way to their hotel, to pass the monastery of St. Dominic. The vesper bell was tolling, when they arrived in sight of it; and, as they passed the gate, Clarinda, seized with a sudden horror, caught hold of Alphonso, and burst into tears. They observed, with indignation, several sanctified priests upon their knees, in the porch, before a wooden image, probably that of St. Dominic, whose blasphemous villanies first produced the execrable institution of the Inquisition.

Some days elapsed before they ventured abroad; during which time they satisfied themselves as to the reality of the proclamation they had seen upon the road. They found it posted in the public places at Madrid, and learned that it was formally read in the streets by the officers under the crown.

The dreadful ravages of time are never so faithfully observed by any person, as by him, who returns, after an absence, to the place of his nativity. Alphonso found many of his best friends in their graves, and others

scattered, by a variety of causes, in distant parts of the world; the few, however, that remained, welcomed him home with the most heartfelt congratulations, and promised him their interest, and personal assistance, to procure, if possible, redress for the unwarrantable injuries he had suffered.

CHAPTER IX.

" Hell, from her gulph profound,
Rouses at thine approach; and, all around,
Her dreadful notes of preparation sound."

MASON.

ALTHOUGH Jerome triumphed in iniquity, without a rival, his mind became the prey of the most tormenting sorrows. He found no comfort in religious reflections; for, having mocked and despised them in his heart, they afforded him no consolation in those hours, when the mind, weary of sublunary pleasures, seeks to repose itself in the anticipation of comforts beyond the grave.

Sometimes he would leave his cell, at the hour of midnight, and wander in solitary and unfrequented walks. Sometimes he would meditate amongst the tombs in the burying ground of his convent; but, in contemplating those awful monuments of our mutability, he was soon unusually overpowered by the piercing sensations of

horror. The shades of the many victims to his cruelty glided before his eyes, as he paced, with unhallowed steps, the consecrated earth. His consequence, his power, his authority, soon became the subject of general contempt amongst those who before trembled at his word: for, when intelligence was received at St. Catherine's, of Biffare's death, a sister from a convent in a provincial town was appointed to succeed her in the office of lady prioress; and, a few nights after she was installed, the unfortunate Amantha came to the gates of the priory, and demanded admittance; her story being told, she was instantly received under the protection of this abbess, whose piety and benevolence endeared her to all the sisterhood of her own monastery, and to those who knew her without the walls.

Jerome was then, for the first time, positively denied admittance into the convent of St. Catherine's; and the monks of his own order gave him to understand, by private marks of contempt, that they only waited for a favourable opportunity, to banish him from the sect with infamy and disgrace.

"Am I," he would cry, "to be made the sport of female arrogance, and monkish indifference? Is friendship to be estimated only in proportion as we extend influence and authority? Have I lived to be deserted by the sycophants that so late revered the very earth I trod upon? They shall find

me quick to feel their scorn, and severe in my revenge."

One evening, as he sat at the window, observing the sun beautifully illumine the heavens, a man from the prison rapped at his door, and brought him information, that some unknown gentleman had been at the council chamber several times; and special conferences, in consequence of their appearance, were held continually amongst the Inquisitors.

"There is a fellow," said the ruffian, "whose name is Pedro, and he says he knows you, and sends his respects to you."

"Damn him!" exclaimed Jerome, with a wild terrific stare: "had the devil but been in possession of that villain's soul, I should have triumphed over the malice of my enemies. I am totally lost: he knows my character well. Go back to the prison, and watch the conduct of the officers; procure, if possible, intelligence, as to their proceedings, through the means of the secretary; he is not proof against bribery—and you shall not fail to be rewarded: look to what I command. Sincerity has been uniformly displayed in your conduct; desert it not at this critical period. Go, and remember, I have been your friend."

The ruffian retired.

"This is the time," cried the monk, "when the secrets of my heart involve me in the deepest horrors of reflection. Nature

seems to be enthralled with one cold and icy chain, that binds me to anticipation and distress. I cannot quit this scene of misery; my steps are watched: the villain Pedro hunts me from the abode of men. If the circumstances related by the assassin, should prove true, shall I suffer myself to be exhibited at the *auto du fe*, a martyr to the vengeance of an Inquisitorial Judge? No. Sooner shall some fatal drug close these eyes in endless oblivion, than the last moments of my life be devoted to public penance upon the scaffold."

Here some person rapped loudly at his door. He cautiously inquired who was there; and finding it to be the ruffian, from the Inquisition, admitted him.

"Oh! it is all over with you," exclaimed the man. "Orders are issued, to examine the secret cells and hiding places of your convent and St. Catherine's, and I fear you are the principal object they are in search of."

"They shall have me," cried the friar, indignantly; "but not to hold me up to public scorn, or torture me at the peaceful hour of death with flames and exhortations. You have sensibly obliged me," he cried, and threw a large purse of valuables upon the ground. "Leave me, and keep your counsel."

At that instant the porter of the convent entered his cell, and delivered him a billet,

which, he said, was left at the gate. by a youth of about fifteen.

No expressions can paint his horror and confusion when he read the following words:

“ Jerome, Alexo is in Madrid, Although the death of the unfortunate Francis has deprived him of the means to bring before the state Inquisitors testimonies of your guilt, which must have inevitably doomed you to death, yet no opportunity will be lost to effect it.

ALEXO.”

“ The time is come,” cried the terrified friar, “ when confession may administer comfort to my sinking spirits. He sat down and wrote the following letter:

“ TO DON MEDILLA DE GRADO,
GRAND INQUISITOR.

“ This letter contains the private confessions of a man, whose life has been devoted to the blackest of human villanies. Murder, robbery, and debauchery, have constituted the chief part of his studies. The sacred altar has been prophaned, vows violated, and the consecrated tombs of saints converted into dungeons for the victims of his treachery. He has been taught by his religion, to hold, as a sacred fact, the certainty of salvation, if absolution could be administered to the dying, before the soul departed from the body; and if penitence can

now shelter him from the vengeance of his God, how glorious was the hour when first he imbibed its conciliating and adored precepts! He relies upon the faith of the catholic creed for the mercy of his God. He implores that forgiveness of sins, which mankind are taught to expect from contrition. The night is far spent, and he shudders at the approach of day; for, at that hour you will find his body; but the soul will be precipitated into eternity.

“ Observe, and execute, the following commands:

“ CONFESSIONS.

“ The beautiful and once beloved Cleanthe, daughter of Don Alphonso de Berida, whose death has been generally admitted, is alive. Yes! she lives, to triumph at the fall of her enemy, her betrayer, her deluded persecutor. Cleanthe is confined in a castle, the property of one Roderigo, uncle to Alexo, formerly a monk of my own order, and which stands in a valley near a range of mountains that are contiguous to the town of Meides, in old Castile. Let the owner be seized, and questioned concerning her: if he refuses to deliver her up to the officers of justice, let a female, of a low stature, and deformed, be threatened with the rack, and she will instantly discover the place of her concealment. Her mother has escaped from my possession, and her retreat has not yet been discovered. Her father is in exile.”

“Amantha, whom I purposed, with the assistance of De Carros, to murder in the chapel of St. Dominic, is now living with the abbess of St. Catherine’s.”

The clock struck the hour of twelve! The pen dropped from his hand. He started from his seat.

“What is this,” he cried, “that thus appals my sinking spirits? Are the visitations of hell to be endured here and hereafter?—Oh God!”

He pressed the crucifix to his lips; but that holy talisman failed in the effect. Its power, in restoring comfort to the wretched was now no longer acknowledged. He dashed it on the floor, and turned to finish his confessions; but, observing in the sky streaks of light that foretold the approach of morn,

“I must away,” he exclaimed, “and procure the means to save me from a public exhibition. My cell must be my grave. I cannot rest. The torments of hell surround me. The very air seems infected, as I breathe; and nature groans beneath the load of my infamy. To-morrow—great God!—to-morrow—and I shall discover the awful mystery of eternity!”

As he was hastily proceeding thro’ the cloisters, to the elaboratory, for a medicine,

“To root out the written troubles of the brain,”

Two men, habited as Alguazils, seized him by the throat, and dashed him on the

ground. He struggled, but in vain. They bound him with cords, and conveyed him to a dungeon, in the fatal prison, where he had so often exhibited his villany and despotic authority.

The next night he was led to the private judgment hall, and examined at the tribunal. He there observed one of the Inquisitors, who condemned Biffare, sitting in judgment upon him. He ordered four persons, who were standing in a circle at the extremity of the apartment, to advance. They approached; and when the monk perceived they were his accusers, when he saw the ill-fated Clarinda, with Alexo, standing before him, in person, he shuddered, with signs of the deepest horror; and, lifting up his eyes to heaven, he exclaimed,

“ God be merciful ! ”

As they were proceeding to put some questions to him, two officers, who had been sent to search his cell, arrived in the judgment hall, and produced the paper, containing his unfinished confession.

As the secretary read the first, Clarinda shrieked aloud, and sunk lifeless upon the floor. Terror and confusion reigned in the bosom of every one present. He was remanded to his dungeon. And, as he passed back to his prison, he was reviled, and almost struck at, by the torturers, whom he had so often employed, and so liberally rewarded, for acts of villany.

“ Sic transit gloria mundi.”

When Pedro heard of the confession of Jerome, he recollected that a lady was brought, at midnight, to the castle of Roderigo, upon the mountains; but no one ever could discover what became of her. Officers, with a party of soldiers, were dispatched, attended by Alphonso and Alexo, to surprise the castle, and seize the domestics, with their master.

Pedro, accompanying them as a guide, rode furiously before them. It was late at night before they arrived at the valley; and on reaching the gate of the castle, they found it open, and the place totally deserted. They entered the hall, and ranged over the edifice with caution, searching every part with the greatest strictness; but no human being was found. As they were proceeding to examine the ruins, near the spot, by the light of their torches, they discovered a woman turn swiftly into a solitary avenue.

"There is the old beldam," said Pedro, "that managed the affairs of the household, at the castle, and whom, if you recollect, we saw sleeping before the fire in the hall, with old Conrad, the porter."

They instantly pursued her, and, before she could escape, came up with her.

"Ah! by St. Dennis," cried Pedro, "you are likely to meet with a reward for all your tricks now. Come, come! no whining; go with us to the castle: we want a little information, which, I have no doubt, you can give us."

She was hurried into the great hall, and, upon examination, declared, that the cavaliers, her masters, had been apprized, by a ruffian from Madrid, of Jerome's critical situation; and, knowing that he could discover the place of their retreat, they had fled away, and left only her behind.

"But," said Alphonso, "in what secret place is the lady confined, that was brought here some time back, about midnight, by two ruffians, habited as officers of the Inquisition?"

"Come, come!" cried Pedro, taking a pistol from his belt, "be quick in answering that question; or dread the consequence!"

The old woman immediately sunk upon her knees, and exclaimed, in the greatest agitation,

"Spare my life! spare my life! and I will conduct you directly to her prison."

This they promised, and she led them to the ruins; when, after traversing a variety of subterraneous passages, they arrived at a small tower, where they found Cleanthe, stretched upon a bed of straw, in the most melancholy state of existence.

The feelings of Alphonso overcame him, and he swooned in the arms of a soldier.

The unfortunate victim of villany was taken from her dungeon, and conveyed to the hall of the castle, where a fire was lighted, and the wretched girl informed that she was restored to liberty, and the protection of her father.

She fixed her eyes upon her surrounding friends, with a terrific glare; and, when Alphonso called her by name, she started from her seat, and, supporting herself against the wall, exclaimed, in the voice of wild and disconsolate frenzy—

“ And do you think, by artifice so shallow, to convey me back to that hellish monster, Jerome? Why am I to be distracted with a repetition of ills that never can be rooted from my memory? Oh! let me return to my dungeon, and make that bed of straw my grave. I am weary of my life. Bertram is dead; and I would that I were laid by his side: for the world is filled with villains! His spirit has often whispered to me, that, amongst the angels in heaven, I should live in peace and happiness.”

“ Am I so altered,” said Alphonso, pressing her withered hand affectionately, “ that you cannot recollect your father?”

“ Father!” she exclaimed, shuddering with horror; “ I have no father. Great God! they tore him from me, with cruelty and injustice; and now perhaps, he wanders through the world, friendless, and in beggary. Religion is a curse upon mankind; it deals in blood. The holy father, Jerome, murdered my mother: but she is in heaven; and we should not disturb the spirits of the blest, nor speak of the dead, but in prayer. Oh, my head!”

She burst into a flood of tears, and sunk lifeless in her father's arms.

Whilst they were anxiously waiting her recovery, a soldier came in, almost breathless, with the intelligence, that the old woman had discovered the retreat of the robbers, and that his comrades were engaged in a desperate conflict with them. The greater part of the group which surrounded Alphonso and his daughter immediately ran to their assistance, whilst a few remained in the hall to protect them from violence.

As they attentively listened to every noise which entered along the galleries of the building, they perceived, thro' the gothic windows, a great light in the air. A man entered the hall, and cried aloud,

"The north wing of the castle is on fire!"

They immediately hurried, with the distressed Alphonso, and his almost expiring daughter, to the plain before the castle, and continued watching for the event of a circumstance so extraordinary, for some time. The flames rapidly increased; and, fearful that the robbers might be masters of the field, Pedro was dispatched for the horses that were secured in the valley. He soon arrived with two, reporting that the others had broken loose, and strayed away.

Alphonso seated his daughter in the best manner that he could, before him, upon one, and ordered Pedro and Alexo to mount the other, and make for the village

he had conducted them to, on their former flight from the castle.

On their arrival at the village, refreshments and necessary comforts were immediately procured for Cleanthe; and, as the morning advanced, Pedro was dispatched at the head of a body of peasantry, who had been greatly infested with the robbers, under the deceitful appellation of holy monks of benevolence, to assist the soldiers. On their arrival at the scene of action, they saw the castle still in flames, and, making for the valley, met the soldiers dragging along with them three ruffians, in the habits of friars, bound with cords.

"Halloo, my brave fellows!" cried Pedro; "I have brought here a body of reserve; but I see you have conquered these infernal fellows."

"Aye, aye," said one of the soldiers, "and warm work we have had too. Where are the gentleman and the lady?"

"Oh! they are safe," answered Pedro.

"That's well," said the soldier. "The villains thought they were not apprized of the castle being on fire, and, I dare say, they expect they are consumed."

The rest of the troops soon after made their appearance, bearing some of their wounded companions.

The ruffians were conducted with great triumph to the village, and from thence to the metropolis, and lodged in the prison of the capital.

Alphonso arrived at Madrid, by slow stages, two days after the entry of the soldiers with their prisoners. It was thought prudent to convey Cleanthe to the house of a friend, until she was sufficiently recovered to meet the piercing sensation, which an interview with her mother would unavoidably occasion.

Clarinda, the instant her husband entered the house, flew to meet him, trembling, and pale with fear, lest he should not have accomplished the object of his journey. She started with terror when she found him alone, and, eagerly embracing him, inquired for Cleanthe!

"She is safe," said Alphonso; "but, fearful an interview, so unexpected and distressing, might operate with bad consequences upon her mind, not yet recovered from the effect occasioned by her sudden delivery from prison, I have procured her a residence in a friend's house, for a few days, until her strength will permit her to see you. She is sadly altered, Clarinda!"

They both were drowned in tears, when Don Bertram entered the room, accompanied by Alexo and Amantha, whose death he had so affectionately lamented in the forest; but whom he found, from the confessions of Jerome, to be alive, and residing in the convent of St. Catherine. After the usual expressions of joy for each other's good fortune were over, Amantha, at the request of Clarinda, accompanied her hus-

band to the house where Cleanthe resided, and attended upon her until she was sufficiently recovered to see her mother.

This interview, soon after, took place. A scene of more affecting sorrow cannot be conceived. The mother, drowned in tears, supporting her almost expiring daughter; the father, as if inspired by the agonies of grief, offering to his God the prayer of gratitude, for his merciful protection; whilst the surrounding friends mingled their tears with those of the once wretched family of Don Alphonso—formed a picture worthy to be illustrated by the bold and fascinating pencil of a Raphael or Corregio.

When Alexo was about to retire to rest, a message came from an Inquisitor, that a person, who was examining before him, wished to see him, upon matters that related materially to his interest.

He immediately accompanied the messenger to the tribunal, and found the person, before the judge, to be his uncle, Roderigo.

“ You are, no doubt,” said the culprit, “ surprised to find me in this situation; but when I tell you that I have been captain of a band of robbers, and in close connection with Jerome, your inveterate enemy, for many years, you must call it a miracle that I have escaped the punishments due to my crimes so long. Alexo, I am persuaded, from the evidence of that rogue Pedro, my

death is certain. Before I am condemned, therefore, by this holy tribunal (for reasons justified by the conviction, that I am restoring to you nothing more than your right,) I return back the deeds of your estates, entrusted to me by your father. You will find them valuable and uninjured."

He delivered the papers to Alexo, and, pressing his hand affectionately, bade him a last farewell, and the examination proceeded.

When the citizens became acquainted with the circumstances of Don Alphonso's family, and the tricks of the impious and debauched friar, it was the topic of conversation at every table and public place of entertainment; the trial of Jerome was looked for with a degree of anxiety never before experienced by the public mind: and the curiosity to see the unfortunate victims of his cruelty increased more and more every day. At length the day arrived, when the hall of the Inquisition was to be opened for the trial of Jerome; but the people were informed by a proclamation, that the Holy Inquisition, conceiving a public trial to be inconsistent with their accustomed mode of proceeding, had tried the friar privately, and banished him to a convent, at a distance.

"Banished!" exclaimed Alphonso, as he accidentally read the proclamation in the streets, when he was proceeding to the hall

with Clarinda, as an evidence against Jerome.

All eyes were upon him. He shuddered for the consequences. A letter dropt into the secret box of the Inquisition would have doomed him to a perpetual and miserable existence in a dungeon, for such a speech.

He returned to his home, and consulted upon the best means to preserve the peace of his family from the violence of future ecclesiastical associates. He knew the metropolis of a great nation must unavoidably contain the evils he wished to avoid; and the monks, he conceived (and with truth and justice,) would not in the least suffer in their reputation by the public testimony of Jerome's immorality, from the bigoted prejudices in favour of their adored supporters of absolution and remission of sins. As Jacques had accepted a commission in the army, he determined to quit the capital, and retire with his family to a paternal estate in the kingdom of Arragon, where their future days might be spent with comfort, and uninterrupted by the vicissitudes of fortune, the artful dissimulations of church and state, and the damnable injustice of the Inquisition. He communicated his intentions to his friend, Don Bertram, who resolved, without hesitation, to accompany him with his daughter, Amantha. The loss of his son now preyed upon his mind, to a degree, bordering almost upon melancholy: and, retiring into solitude, he

conceived, would be more conducive to his happiness, than living amidst the noise and bustle of the metropolis.

When Alexo heard of this determination, he requested a private interview with Bertram.

It was granted.

"The stranger," said Alexo, "who sent for me to the judgment chamber of the Inquisition, Don Bertram, was my uncle. Grown hoary in the exercise of impious desires, he has now fallen a victim to the laws of his country. Conscious of his certain condemnation, he returned me back the property my father left me, and which he had stolen from me by the artifice of forcing me into a monastery. Amantha's life was saved by me, and, since the discovery, made by Jerome, of her retreat, I have entertained an unconquerable and affectionate regard for her."

Bertram interrupted him.

"It is not to me, Alexo, that these confessions should be made, but to the object of your affection. To night, if you will, make your appearance at the house of Alphonso; the subject shall be discussed; but, for the present we must separate."

Alexo had scarce taken his leave of Bertram, when he was accosted by Pedro in the street, who petitioned to become his faithful valet and humble follower; ere the conversation was finished, and an answer given to Pedro's request, two men, drest

as alguazils, seized Pedro by the collar, and dragged him away to prison. Unfortunately for poor Pedro, Roderigo, in his confessions, discovered a few tricks of his companions, and them too of such a nature, as procured him, notwithstanding all the interest made in his favour, a public whipping in the market-place, and banishment to the galleys for life.

The long expected hour arrived, when Alexo was to hear the sentence of the Inquisitorial court of matrimony. He went to the house of Alphonso, at the hour appointed, and, after waiting some time in the ante-chamber, was ushered into the room, where Bertram and his daughter waited for his approach.

"Alexo," said the Don, "I have communicated your wishes to my Amantha, and she returns you love for love. Take her, Alexo; and know that it is to you only that the title to my daughter's affection belongs."

As soon as the necessary preparations were ready, the nuptials took place at Madrid, and the parties, with Alphonso and his family, set out for their retreat into the kingdom of Arragon.

The new abbess of St. Catherine's, on hearing of Florella's flight from the convent, requested that notice might be given in every church and convent in the metropolis, for her to return to her order. This circumstance produced an enquiry concern-

ing the fugitive nun, and she was discovered in the house of an under porter to the Inquisition, who, no doubt, held her in trust for the purposes of Jerome, but alleged, in excuse for his conduct, that he detained her only until an opportunity should offer for her to return in safety to the convent. She was received into the nunnery with all possible regard by the sisterhood, and joined in the general joy at the establishment of order, regularity, and virtue, in a house that had been sunk into disgrace by the prophane and abandoned conduct of Bissare. The honour of confessor was abolished, by the intercession of St. Anna with the minister of state, and all intercourse with friars entirely cut off, as the first step to preserve the continence and character of the nuns and the nunnery.

For some time, however, after Jerome's banishment, the abbess appeared unusually low and thoughtful: she seldom frequented the little musical parties amongst the sisters, which she, at first, patronized with eagerness and pleasure; but sought out, at evening, the most retired parts of the garden, to weep, as was observed by the nuns, over a letter which she seemed to peruse with a degree of sorrowful pleasure. Every vestal studied to afford her comfort and assistance, but she dismissed them with smiles and affectionate caresses. One night, about the hour of twelve, when Florella had retired

to rest, some person rapped at the door of her cell.

"You may come in," said she, "for I have not barred the door."

It was the abbess.

She started with astonishment!

"Be not alarmed, my daughter," said Anna, as she pressed her hand affectionately to her lips, "I am come to sit with you; my mind, to-night, is not free from its unpleasant reflections, and I want consolation."

Florella immediately quitted her bed, and dressed herself; and, as she placed the picture of her mother in her bosom, exclaimed,

"I always take great care of this treasure; it is the picture of my mother; of her, whom I left when an infant, and have not seen since our separation. To me it is dearer than life; for it has preserved my person from the most violent and brutal outrage."

Here she accurately related to St. Anna the atrocious conduct of Jerome; but, before she had concluded her story, the abbess rose from her seat, and, clasping Florella to her bosom, burst into a flood of tears.

A mutual silence for some time prevailed, when the abbess broke from her embraces, and, fixing her eyes steadfastly upon the nun, drew a letter from her pocket, and gave it her to read. The contents were as follow:

*"To the Virtuous and Benevolent Prioress
of St. Catherine's."*

"There is a nun, now, I am afraid, a wanderer upon the world, by name Florella; she was formerly of your convent, but fled from it, under some apprehension that Bissare would rigorously enforce the laws of the order, for a trivial fault. If she should ever return (and, perhaps, when I am no more, this may be the case,) look upon her as your daughter; treat her with compassion and kindness; love her, and protect her; for she is the child of him who addresses you."

"Oh God!—It is signed, JEROME."

The letter dropt from her hand, and she sunk lifeless upon her bed. The abbess had scarce recovered her, when the main bell rang for prayers. They went together into the chapel, and, as they returned, the morning was just breaking. After wandering, for some time, along the shady walks of the garden; to feel the refreshing air that blew along the avenues, the abbess recommended Florella to lie down upon her matress, and compose herself.

"To night, at twelve," said she, "you may expect me at your cell, when I will explain the dreadful mystery."

She affectionately embraced her, and they separated at the entrance of the cloisters.

Florella spent the day in her cell, overpowered by sorrow and anxiety. She counted the clock as it struck the hours,

until the time of midnight arrived; when she slept softly into the gallery. It was quite dark; she listened with a degree of impatience, scarce to be conceived, for the footsteps of St. Anna. The light of a lamp at length beamed upon the wall fronting the staircase, and, in a moment afterwards, she saw the abbess appear, bearing as before, a lamp and crucifix.

When she entered the apartment, Florella's health was inquired after with tender anxiety.

"I am much better," she replied; "but my mind will ever dwell upon that incident of my life, with the most poignant horror."

"Let it not," said the abbess, as she seated herself by the side of Florella, "for my sake, be the means of making you unhappy. You are indebted to God for your preservation, and to me for your misfortunes. The tale, which I am about to relate to you, may appear strange and unaccountable; but it will discover truths that cannot long be concealed from the world.

"Florella! I am the daughter of a poor cottager, who lived in the kingdom of Arrogan, and supported his family, consisting of my mother and self, by industry and hard labour, until the hand of God swept him from the world. This misfortune happened when I was about eighteen. The year after the death of my father is memo-

rable by the death of my mother. Deprived of two affectionate parents, I was left, a young and inexperienced orphan, on the world, in poverty, and destitute of friends. A neighbouring cottager, who had worked with my father in the forest, gave me an asylum in his house, until I could procure for myself a situation in some family. The castle of Don Astura was not far distant from the village where I resided; and, one evening, as I was weeping over the grave of my mother, a gentleman, in a hunting dress, accosted me, and affectionately inquired into the cause of my sorrow. When I had faithfully related the misfortunes I had experienced, he desired me to appear at the castle the next morning, and, in the interim, he would recommend me to the lady Astura. I was at the castle by the time he appointed, and the same person appeared in the hall, and desired me to follow him. I did so: and he led me into a room, where I found the lady Astura sitting at an organ. She immediately rose from her seat, and, listening to my distresses with the tenderest compassion, promised me her countenance and protection. I lived in the family, for some time, in the capacity of attendant on her ladyship's female companion. I loved, at the time of evening, to wander amongst the romantic walks of the beautiful garden, and listen to the parting songs of the birds that sheltered themselves in the solitude. I could play a

little upon the lute, and delighted to practise my most favorite songs in a grotto, at no great distance from the grand walk that led to the castle hall. One evening, in the height of summer, after I had finished my store of songs, I sat at the window, to contemplate the grandeur of the hanging clouds, as the sun-beams shone upon them with unusual splendor; when my reflections were disturbed by the appearance of our confessor. He approached me with respect, and, taking hold of my hand, requested I would indulge him with a song. I complied. He seemed in raptures. He flattered me. He embraced me. My heart was open to dissimulation; and, believing the most violent and inconsistent protestations, I looked upon him as my affectionate protector. Our friendship, or rather I may say, love, increased every time we met; and, to feed my vanity, he had my picture taken by an Italian artist, who came to finish some fresco paintings in the concert chamber. But I, too soon, discovered the effect of my imprudence; for I found myself pregnant. Yes, my Florella! those untimely interviews gave birth to you. You are the offspring of Jerome and St. Anna."

She clasped her to her bosom in the transports of passionate affection.

"No sooner was my situation discovered by the servants, than I was ordered to quit the castle, and, horrid idea! found in Je-

rome, my seducer, a most inveterate persecutor. He represented me to the lady Astura in the most despicable light, and insisted upon my being driven from the castle, as an object unworthy of her protection and regard. In vain did I assert my claim to pity and candour; in vain did I request to tell my tale.—All ideas of humanity seemed to have deserted her on the occasion; and I was thrust upon the world, in ignominy and disgrace, a friendless and disconsolate wanderer. It was a severe night in winter, when I saw the castle gate shut against me; and, strolling into the wood adjoining the grounds of Don Astura, I threw myself upon the ground, in hopes that death would put an end to my sufferings before the morning: but I was awakened from a light slumber, about day break, by the forester, who compassionately took me again to his cottage, and suffered me to remain there until I was brought to bed. About that time his wife died of a fever, and, at his request, I staid with him for three years after my delivery. It was then that I determined to quit the world for ever. Jerome, I was informed, had left the castle, to supply a vacancy in the order of St. Dominic, at Madrid. This circumstance gave fresh vigour to my expectation: accordingly, one evening, I fled from the cottage, leaving you to the care of the forester, with the following letter;—

“ The wretch, who leaves with you her

daughter, is tired of existence in the world; she seeks a sanctuary of nuns. If you take the child Florella to the castle, the Lady Astura will provide for her.

“ From the time I entered the convent, to the hour in which I discovered you, I could gain no tidings whatever of your fate. My applications to the forester were fruitless: he constantly replied, that he carried you, according to my directions, to the castle, and had never seen you since. I endeavoured, by means of the porter, to learn something concerning your fate from the family, but in vain. Let us forget, my dear Florella, the name of your unfortunate and iniquitous father; I am now mistress of an asylum, where the footsteps of impiety shall never enter, to disturb the hallowed tranquillity that reigns within its walls. My life shall be devoted to religion; and may the horrid example of Jerome be considered as an awful instance of the Almighty’s vengeance, when his name is blasphemed by man!”

St. Ann inquired how Florella came by the picture.

“ The lady Astura,” said she, “ when she sent me to this convent, gave it me, and told me it was the picture of my mother, which was presented to her as a specimen of beautiful painting by Jerome: ‘ Keep it,’ said she, ‘ as the sacred emblem of a victim to the most artful villany, and look upon

me as your friend and protectress.' Her death happened soon after I entered the convent, and, ever since that unfortunate event, I have indulged no hope of meeting with a friend in the world."

The abbess clasped her to her bosom. "But in me," said she, "you find a mother."

At this instant, footsteps were heard hastily pacing along the gallery.

"I cannot find the abbess," some one exclaimed, as she passed the door of the cell. "My God! what shall we do?"

St. Anna entered the gallery. She was instantly surrounded by several nuns, who exclaimed,

"Oh, mother! Melissa is at the point of death; she raves in distraction, and constantly calls upon the name of our deceased abbess, and Florella."

St. Anna inquired into the cause of her insanity. No one could inform her.

The cries of Melissa now echoed along the gallery. It was near morning.

"The sun shines," exclaimed the distracted nun, "but to illuminate my dark and hellish deeds. Bissare invites me to the clouds; but she sits upon a throne, encircled by a flame of sulphureous fire. Oh, Florella! pardon me.—Catherine! thy bloody form still visits me. Down, down, to the grave!"

A solemn pause ensued, and the abbess, attended by her nuns, proceeded to the cell,

where the unfortunate female lay naked on her mattress. As they entered the apartment, she sang the following song, to an affecting and melancholy air—

Every night, and every morn,
By a sister's cold death bed,
I have dwelt, a while to mourn
The sufferings of the sorrow'd dead.
No flow'r or hallow'd shrub grew there,
No yew tree wav'd with sullen gloom;
Nought, but Melissa's silent tear,
Bedeck'd the murder'd vestal's tomb.

She burst into a flood of tears, as she repeated the last line. The abbess spoke to her. She looked piteously at the surrounding sisters, and began to sing again.

The abbess ordered all the nuns to quit the cell, except two of the elder ones, whom she requested to attend upon the distracted vestal. They remained with Melissa during the day, and at midnight sent a message to the abbess, that she wished to see her. St. Anna ordered them to retire to rest; she found the nun considerably better, and, seating herself on her couch, requested to know if she had every thing she desired.

"Yes," said Melissa, "I want nothing, but peace of mind."

She looked wildly at the abbess.

"There is a God, St. Anna! and, they say, he is just and merciful."

The abbess took her by the hand.

"Be comforted; Melissa; and if you

have any circumstance upon your mind, that tends to aggravate the severity of your distressing malady, disclose it to me instantly."

"I will, I will," said the nun, shuddering with horror; and folding her arms around her neck, "but let us first go to prayers."

The abbess complied with her request, and mass was said by her bed-side.

After the ceremony was concluded, the nun begged that no person might be in the room, whilst she disclosed to her the secret which brought on her disorder.

When the abbess was left alone with her, she began, in the following manner:

"Look upon me as a murderer, detest me, as a fiend of cruelty; I have broken my vows, and violated the sacred duty of daughter, friend, and sister. Bissare, the late ill-fated abbess, was my mother. Ah, lady! look not so stern upon me: she was an abandoned female, and instilled into my mind the principles of cruelty and injustice. She murdered Catherine, daughter of Don Juan de Castillas. She was called Clara, to deceive the sisterhood.

"Great God!" exclaimed the abbess, as she rose from the couch.

"Stay, stay; for God's sake do not leave me! you promised to hear my complaints, and comfort me."

"Comfort!—you have no hopes of forgiveness left."——

"No hopes of forgiveness left!" cried the distracted nun, as she burst into a frantic fit of sorrow. "Lord God of heaven!"

The abbess continued,

"To precipitate into eternity the soul of a friend, is to incur the most severe indignation of God."

"Friend!—Catherine was dearer to me than a friend. She was, by the laws of our religion, my sister; her bones lie hid beneath the floor of this cell; but they shall not be removed; for I have prayed and wept over them until they are become hallowed by my tears. Oh, she was barbarously murdered!"

She paused.

"There is a whispering in the room. Hark! Heard you not a sigh?"

The abbess again attempted to quit the room.

Melissa grasped her firmly by the hand.

"You shall not stir from this place," she cried sternly, "until you have heard the conclusion of my story. It was a damnable and hideous deed, I acknowledge; but my mother forced me to execute it. Yes; Bissare stood over me, whilst I plunged this dagger in Catherine's heart."

She drew from beneath the bed clothes a bloody poniard, and gazed upon it with inexpressible looks of horror.

St. Anna shrieked: but the nuns had retired to rest, and silence reigned in every part of the gallery.

A dreadful pause of some minutes ensued.

"The cause of her death," said the nun, in a kind of whisper, "was her being pregnant by a holy friar. I knew him well; but he now moulders in his grave: his name was Francis. I have ever repented the deed; and, whenever an opportunity offered, I haunted him, to distress his mind for thinking of such a bloody scheme. Oh! Biffare was a wicked mother."

She turned suddenly towards the abbess. "Florella too," she cried, "has been the victim of my iniquity. It was I, St. Anna, that advised Jerome, secretly, of all her haunts; it was I that laid the scheme for her ruin. It was I that detained her in the porter's house, purposely for the base designs of Jerome. Tell her, that I beg her forgiveness."

The abbess, no longer able to endure the horrors that the nun's confession occasioned in her mind, rushed from the room, and fled precipitately through the gallery, calling aloud for the sisters to appear. It was soon crowded with affrighted nuns. She related to them the situation of Melissa, and begged of the sisterhood to go instantly and attend her. They arrived too late; the unfortunate nun was found weltering in her blood upon the floor from a wound, given by her own hand, with the dagger that was encrusted with Catherine's blood.

They raised her from the floor, and endeavoured, with the assistance of Merenda,

the sister physician, to stop the effusion of blood, but to no effect: the dagger had by repeated strokes penetrated too far, and Melissa soon expired in the greatest agony.

The abbess, after the accustomed ceremonies used on such occasions were performed, desired the body to be removed into the chapel for interment; and attended by the whole sisterhood, she raised the floor of Melissa's cell, and discovered the mouldering bones of Catherine. She had been buried in her dress, and the rosary and cross remained entire. Horror and distress reigned in every bosom. All recollected the mysterious circumstance of Jurgutha's disappearance, and the solemn procession on the occasion; when the abbess gave out that she was taken to heaven, in the night, by an angel. The mystery was now unravelled. The bones of the unfortunate Catherine were collected, and deposited in the tomb which was before erected to her memory; and the remains of Melissa interred in the vaults belonging to the chapel of the Inquisition, as a mark of disrespect to her character. Solemn and pathetic dirges were annually sung by the sisterhood at the tomb of Catherine, which was looked upon as a shrine, sacred to the sufferings of innocence and virtue. Her cross and rosary were deposited in the church amongst esteemed relics; and her fate kept a secret from her friends and the public, to prevent the disagreeable consequences that would

inevitably have resulted from the discovery of such a barbarous proceeding.

The convent now became the seat of happiness and strict devotion. St. Anna, having been the dupe and victim of religious artifice and deceit, justly thought, that the confessional chair of the order was more fit to be occupied by one of her own sex, than the young lusty friars of St. Dominic; she therefore presided in it herself. It caused a great tumult amongst the holy men of the day; but she succeeded in her scheme, and, on those days which were dedicated to the saints, she usually heard confessions. The convent chapel was then open to the public; and, one evening, as she sat in state in the confessional, with her ear placed against the aperture, a voice whispered,

“ Suppose, lady, I should, in those desperate hours of love, when nought is thought of but the attainment of the object of our hearts; suppose, I say, lady, I should break through the barriers of religion, and steal away a nun from your convent.”

“ You will be punished as you deserve by the Holy Inquisition.”

As the person withdrew from the spot, St. Anna peeped through the aperture, and discovered a tall man, wrapped in a soldier's cloak, with a military feather in his hat, stalk down the aisle of the chapel. It was near midnight, ere she had received the ri-

diculous confessions of all the penitents present; but her mind was too much engaged, in endeavouring to unravel the mysterious question put to her by the stranger, to afford the delinquent much consolation, by her answers. She had not long retired to rest, when she heard some persons under the garden wall with music; she rose instantly, and opened the windows. The night was calm and beautiful; and, as the soft airs floated upon the breeze, she listened to them with an unusual degree of rapture and attention. In a few minutes it ceased. As she remained at the window, in expectation of hearing it again, she observed the form of a female glide down one of the avenues. Her senses were awakened; she no longer listened for the music, but, hurrying on her clothes, quitted her apartment, and, relating her discovery to three confidential nuns, went, accompanied by them, into the garden, in search of the fugitive. They traversed the most secret parts, with no effect, until they came opposite to a rugged tower that rose above the wall covered with ivy. They there discovered a man seated upon a projection of the ruin, apparently waiting for the approach of some person in the garden. As the moon shone upon the scene, they could plainly perceive him to be a cavalier of some distinction, by the diamonds which sparkled in his hat, and those that adorned the hilt of his sword.

"The mystery will soon be cleared up," exclaimed the abbess; "no punishment can be inflicted on the sister, who encourages these unholy revels, that will equal the crime."

She had not uttered the words a moment, when a nun appeared clad in a deep black veil.

"My love, my adored angel!" cried the cavalier, as he sprang from the wall to the ground, "I thought the night would have passed without my seeing you."

"Hush!" she cried; "my mother is awake. I heard the chamber window open as I descended the stairs in the tower next her cell. If she should detect us, I am lost for ever."

"Impossible," said the marquis, "by this sacred kiss, I'll"—

"Hold;" cried the abbess, as she rushed between them with a drawn dagger; "violate the chastity of those lips, and you die."

The shrieks of Florella instantly brought his attendants upon the wall.

"Fly!" said the abbess to her nuns, "fly to the great gate, and cry through the streets the situation we are in."

"Hear me," exclaimed the marquis, as he threw himself on his knees, "hear me, before you attempt the sacrifice of my life. Suffer me to retire undisturbed from the garden, this night, and to-morrow I pledge myself to explain the whole of this affair."

At the intercession of the nuns, this request was not, without difficulty, granted. The

marquis retired to his lodgings, disturbed to a degree by this unfortunate adventure. He cursed the impolitic speech he whispered, in a moment of levity, in the ear of the old abbess, as she sat in her confessional. He lay the whole night devising upon the best means to explain the matter to the abbess. At first he thought of concealing his birth and fortune; but, upon reflection, he supposed, that acting honourably, might, in some measure, be the means of quieting the tempest he had raised in St. Anna's mind. He therefore pursued this resolution, and wrote the following letter to the abbess:

" MOST WORTHY OF YOUR SEX,

" The nun, with whom I am in love, being your daughter, I think myself bound by that circumstance alone to act with truth and honour. My affection is unbounded; it cannot be erased by contempt or inattention from any one but the object of my heart. Our meetings have been secret; but those hours have never been devoted to the licentious triumph of our passions. I am a nobleman: my title is the Marquis de la Meridas, nephew to Don Astura, who left me his possessions, which lie in the kingdom of Arragon. They are ample in the extreme. Let me rescue your daughter from the inconsiderate and worthless vows imposed upon her by her religion. I have it in my power to effect it:—Constant in my affection, I vow to God never to quit Madrid until she is in my pos-

session, if you refuse me this request. Is it in St. Anna's disposition to bury innocence, virtue, and beauty, in the gloomy cloisters of a convent? Can she witness her daughter, in the prime of life, bending before the shrine of some departed saint, and telling a few amber beads, rather than have her a beloved mother of a happy family? Oh no, she will cherish the affection Florella entertains for me, and, by releasing her from her religious engagements, restore peace to my bosom, and happiness to hers.

MERIDAS."

He read it over several times; he found it not the exact prototype of his imagination; but his mind was too deeply agitated, to make it better. He dispatched a servant with it to the convent, and bid him wait for an answer.

When the abbess had in some measure recovered her confusion and terror, she ordered Florella into her cell, and peremptorily demanded the keys of her *escrutoire*. The girl at first refused to obey the mandate, by the accustomed artifice of bursting into tears; it had no effect upon her mother; she forced them from her, and, hurrying to her cell, opened the drawers with all the furor of an Inquisitorial familiar. She discovered nothing of any consequence; unfinished drawings, and preserved flowers, alone occupied its secret recesses. A suspicious glance, however, from St. Anna, upon the countenance of her daughter,

bathed in tears, procured the testimonials of Florella's guilt.

"Spare me, my dear mother, and I will discover all. There," she cried, trembling with dreadful apprehension, "there they are. You will find them all there."

She put into her mother's hands a small model of the Virgin Mary. The abbess examined it with attention, and discovered the lady to be hollow, with a little trap door at the bottom of her embroidered petticoat; she started with horror; for, on opening it, a multitude of amorous billets tumbled out of the lady's sanctuary. She read some of them with distraction. They were signed Jerome.

"Jerome!" she exclaimed, "Jerome! Oh God!"

"Mother, they are not the letters you want."

She ran to the table, and presented one from the number to her mother. The seal bore an impression of Don Astura's arms. She started with surprise. At that moment a nun entered with a letter, directed to the abbess—She opened it with an unaccountable tremor—It was from the marquis—She turned to the affrighted Florella—

"Where did you first see him?"

"In the chapel of the Augustine friars."

"And do you love him?" she exclaimed.

"Oh! my dear mother, beyond every thing in the shape of man, I have ever yet witnessed."

"I must treat you rigorously," said St. Anna, "for the sake of observing the rules of the order; but you will bear it with patience, and consider it only as a preliminary step to your future happiness."

"Oh, my dear mother!"

"Hush! the nuns are in the gallery.—I shall summons you, in about an hour, to the parlour, in order to explain to you the enormity of your crimes, and pass the sentence adjudged upon you by the council of elders."

She left the cell, and found a croud of nuns gathered together upon the stairs of the gallery. They dispersed at her request, each one conjecturing what would become of poor Florella. The abbess instantly dispatched an answer to the Marquis's letter. It was to the following effect:

"DEAR MARQUIS,

"Come, instantly to the convent, and desire to speak with me. ST. ANNA."

Rapture sparkled in his eyes when he read those few emphatic words. He wrapped himself in his cloak, and went instantly to the convent grate. He demanded to see the abbess. As he passed thro' a part of the cloisters to the audience parlour, the nuns peeped at him with as much curiosity as if he had been a native of one of the new discovered islands. As he entered the room, the abbess rose from her seat, and took him by the hand.

"Is it possible," she cried, "that the Marquis de la Meridas can condescend to

give his hand to the daughter of the ill-fated St. Anna?"

"And do you suppose," he replied, "that the daughter of St. Anna is unworthy to share with me my possessions. I love her, St. Anna! and, tho' born in Old Castile, would forego the greatest of all earthly advantages, to live with my Florella."——

"But mark me—if you have laid this scheme, purposely, to impose upon my credulity, and dishonour my daughter"—

"Merciful Father!" he exclaimed, as he lifted his eyes to heaven, "if I debase the character of a man, may I incur the wrathful vengeance of my God, and be delivered up to justice, as an example to mankind!"

He produced letters, which bore the signature of Don John De Modena, brother to his aunt: in which the abbess observed, he lamented that his nephew's affection should be placed upon an unattainable object; promises to apply to the pope for a dispensation, to release her from her vows, and a friendly offer of any services that lay within his power to promote his happiness.

These letters had great weight with St. Anna. She had, during her residence at the castle, frequently observed, that Don John De Modena had the confidence of his sister, and, ever since the period when her husband was killed in a battle with the Moors, that she always looked up to him for advice and protection.

"There is no one person on earth to whom I should prefer my daughter to be

united, than to the Marquis of Meridas. Your aunt befriended me in my distress, and to Florella behaved as a mother. But, although my daughter is not bound, by any vows, to a life of celibacy within the walls of this convent, several very serious circumstances occur, to prevent your immediate union. She has transgressed the strict rules of the order; and, in so doing, must suffer the punishment prescribed by the laws."

"You will not," he exclaimed; "you cannot hurt her!"

"The punishment is severe; but when the clock strikes two, if you appear upon the same broken part of the wall, as you did when we discovered you, with a confessor, the marriage may be celebrated in our chapel."

"Oh God! the hour is two?"

"Yes."

"And with a priest, upon the broken tower?"

"Yes."

"Farewel then, till that auspicious hour."

He quitted the monastery, and retired to his lodgings, almost overpowered with the excess of joy, this unexpected change in his fortune created. He immediately dispatched a servant to the first convent for a priest. The good father arrived, stored with holiness and civility.

"My business with you, father," exclaimed the marquis, "is no less than to request you will marry me."

"It shall be complied with, good Segnor."

He was preparing himself to officiate.—

"Not now, my prince of sacrifices! but at two o'clock to-morrow morning."

"At two o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Yes. Can you climb a wall? and dare you marry me to a nun?"

"A nun!" cried the affrighted father; "not for the thumb of St. Paul."

"No; I believe that: but will you for the wallet of St. Peter, and its contents?"

He threw a purse upon the table, filled with gold. All ideas of virtue vanished; and, as the conscientious father slipped it into his side pocket (a trap, no doubt, for many good things:—

"Tell me," said he, in a whisper, "where I am to meet you, at the appointed hour?"

"By the north tower of St. Catherine's monastery."

"St. Catherine's. I will be there in waiting."

During this curious interview between the marquis and the friar, poor Florella was, upon a long hearing before the council of elders, condemned to be confined in a prison, under the chapel, for the space of a month, upon bread and water. She heard her sentence with an affected degree of horror, that seemed to speak the language of contrition. It was mitigated to two days. Night drew near; and preparations were making for conducting Florella, with pompous form, to her prison. The clock struck twelve. The nuns had assembled in the

great chamber. St. Anna seated herself in the midst of them, and manœuvred away the time, discussing unimportant subjects, until it struck one; she then ordered the procession to begin. It marched to the chapel with great solemnity, and, after having lodged Florella in her prison, returned to the convent. Exactly as the clock struck two, the marquis appeared upon the wall, supporting the trembling priest, who looked upon the probability of his falling from the tower, with more horror, than the crime of uniting a female enthusiast with a man of gallantry. He descended, with great dread and difficulty, and accompanied the marquis to the chapel. They found the abbess waiting their approach at the door. She conducted them to the altar; and, taking a lamp which she had secreted for the purpose, descended into the vault, where Florella was immured.

In a few minutes she appeared with the affrighted vestal at the altar. The marquis clasped her in his arms, and the priest immediately performed the ceremony. When it was concluded, St. Anna embraced her daughter, and, after bidding them an affectionate farewell, let them through a wicket into the street, to the great joy of the friar, who expected to ascend the wall again, without the assistance of Jacob's ladder, or the wings of Gabriel, at the hazard of his life.

St. Anna, the next morning, related the affair to the sisterhood. Expressions of

alarm and astonishment ran through the whole multitude. Her marriage appeared to them in a different light, to what it did to the abbess. They looked upon the transaction, as an act, unholy and impure. She wisely considered it as the most effectual step to secure her daughter in the possession of wealth and happiness. In a little time, the circumstance, so repugnant to the principles of the institution, was forgotten; and St. Anna, by her unparalleled conduct, became revered more than ever by the sisters. Florella seldom visited her mother, but, in her letter, said, she experienced, from the marquis, the most tender and affectionate regard. That her hours were crowned with splendor and happiness, and from her attention to the peasantry, residing near the castle, she had become their adoration.

CHAPTER X.

"Such a house broke!
So noble a master fallen! all gone, and not
One friend to take his fortune by the arm,
And go along with him."

TIMON OF ATHENS.

ONE evening, as Don Alphonso and the party were quitting a valley on the borders of Arragon, the big drops of rain, that fell at intervals, foretold the approach of a storm. They returned into the solitude, and, taking shelter in one of the caverns, waited patiently for the ceasing of the shower.

After the storm had continued with great violence for more than two hours, it seemed

somewhat abated; a transient beam of the setting sun illumined, for a moment, the summit of the opposite rock; and, as Alexo looked into the valley, he saw the postilion rush out of the recess he had chosen for the carriage, as one wild with terror. When he approached, he cried aloud,

"I have seen him! I have seen him; by the Virgin's purity have I."

"Seen who?" said Alexo.

"Oh! the devil! he peeped at me several times through a hole in the rock, with eyes as big as the moon: he petrified the poor beasts with his sulphureous breath; and, no doubt, if I had stopped, he would have played his trick upon me in the same manner."

The fellow's appearance convinced Alexo his fears were not imaginary; and he desired he would conduct him to the devil's apartment. They entered a solitary recess, where the carriage, with the horses, stood perfectly safe and uninjured.

"How is this?" said Alexo: "I see no alteration in either the horses or the carriage."

"That may be; but, by the rod of Moses, I saw him, he went through yon hole," pointing to a small aperture at the extremity of the cavern.

Alexo drew his sword, and desired Grado to follow him.

"Not for a cardinal's hat would I venture to hunt after him. The devil is no such a pleasant fellow to meet in a dark cave."

“ Then go and fetch the remainder of the party,” said Alexo; “ the secret avenues of this cavern must be explored.”

On their arrival, Grado furnished him with a lighted torch, by means of a bottle of phosphoros, which he constantly carried about him, for fear of being benighted on the wilds, or forests, destitute of inhabitants. Alexo had not penetrated far into the recess, before he turned to Bertram, who had followed him, and expressed his intention of returning, concluding from the horrid appearance of the cavern, wet and infested with reptiles, that no human being could possibly exist in such a noisome place. When they had just reached the entrance of the passage, a beam of light darted from a small aperture in the rock on the right hand side.

Alexo cautiously surveyed the spot; and, as he was about to enter, a man (bearing a lamp in his right hand, clothed in a coarse woollen robe, girded about him with a knotted cord, and with a beard of a considerable length) intercepted him, and with a designing frown, bade him depart.

“ I came not,” said Alexo, “ to interrupt the happiness you enjoy in this solitary place; but merely to satisfy my doubt, as to this cavern’s being the resort of a human being.”

The man waved his hand for him to return.—He instantly quitted the recess; and, having reached the party, privately related his adventure to Alphonso.

"Well, Segnor," said Grado, "have you discovered the print of his cloven feet? for they say, that rocks harder than adamant receive the impresson of his hoofs, if he happens to walk over them."

At this moment a loud clap of thunder burst over the valley, and the storm, after a pause of some minutes, increased with redoubled violence. The beasts, terrified at the quick flashes of the lightning, became unruly.

Grado attributed this circumstance to the devil he had seen in the cavern; and, fearful of being swallowed by some infernal spirit, begged of them to depart instantly, and he would drive them to the village in no time. This proposal was universally rejected; for the ladies, fearful that the horses might overpower the rider, consented to remain in the cavern, until the appearance of the sky was such as to insure a dry and safe journey to the village. As they were waiting anxiously for the ceasing of the shower, Cleanthe sprang from her seat, and, rushing into the arms of her father, exclaimed,

"God of heaven! what dreadful form is that approaching us?"

Alexo turned instantly, and discovered the anchorite he had seen in the recess coming towards them. When he had nearly reached the spot where the travellers were sitting, he thus addressed them:

"Strangers, to me alone this gloomy habitation affords a pleasing asylum. To

you, who are familiar with the world, it is alarming; and my appearance, no doubt, is horrid in the extreme; but, it is consistent with my own feelings, and the duty I owe to my religious vows. The night seems set in with an awful tempest, and the danger of crossing the plain, at the extremity of this valley, being very great after dark, if you will share with me the food that I am contented with, and remain in my retreat until the morrow, you shall come to no harm, and I will make you welcome."

Distrust and terror seemed to sit on every countenance.

"Nay," he continued, "look upon me for that which I am, a poor and harmless anchorite, one who studies the philosophy of nature, one who has shunned all intercourse with the world, and seeks, in this solitary abode, the calm and pensive pleasures of reflection. I am no villain, but the victim of treachery. You seem to doubt the truth of my assertions; but, surely, if I was disposed to act the villain, four are sufficient to overpower one."

The travellers, who had been several times deceived, cautiously questioned him concerning his mode of living, and the cause for secreting himself in the solitudes of so wild and unfrequented a place.

"I cannot," said he, "explain the mystery here; but if you consent to pass the night with me, in my habitation, I will relate the history of my life."

The storm still continued with great fury, and the horrid idea of remaining in the cold and damp recess of the rock obliged them, reluctantly, to comply with the anchorite's request, and drawing their swords, bade him lead the way to his dwelling. Grado was desired to loose the animals from the carriage, and proceed to a sequestered part of the solitude, where the anchorite said he would meet him, and point out a secure place to lodge the beasts in, full of good pasturage, and sheltered from the weather. This injunction poor Grado was obliged to comply with, but not before he had repeated his stock of prayers for the safety of his person from accidents: the soul he left to shift for itself. The travellers, after following the stranger through several unfrequented path-ways, arrived at a decayed flight of steps, which the anchorite ascended, followed by his guests; and, opening a door at the top, he conducted them thro' a gloomy avenue of tall forest trees, that overshadowed a venerable ruin. The stillness of the solitude, the fluttering of the night birds as the light approached, and the rolling of the distant thunder, preceded by the blue streams of lightning, impressed them with sensations of horror and alarm. Their many narrow escapes from the premeditated designs of villany, afforded them the mortifying reflection, that credulity is a rooted failing in mankind, and seldom capable of being corrected by experience. They passed through

a part of the cloisters that were standing, and, after some little difficulty, gained a wicket, which led into a small oratory, which was entire, and afforded a shelter from the inhospitable elements. On entering this hallowed retreat, they discovered a good fire blazing on the hearth, and a plentiful supply of dry wood piled by the side. A few old gothic chairs, and an oak table, were the principal part of his furniture. A number of books lay upon the table, and a large cupboard (no doubt the repository of many good comforts in the days of the holy friars, who inhabited the monastery) served him as a store room. He set before them fruit, bread, and some weak wine, on which they feasted, with an appetite proof against the whimsical niceties of the palate. As they were regaling themselves in this manner, and thanking the hermit for his bounty, a voice, without, was heard crying for assistance.

“Hark!” said Alphonso, “I hear the voice of some person without.”

Their swords were instantly drawn, and expecting the hermit had betrayed them into the hands of robbers, they were going to sacrifice him to their fury, when he recollected poor Grado had been forgotten.

“I will instantly go in search of him,” said he, and, lighting a torch at the fire, left the chapel a different way to that by which they entered. Every one alike felt the severest pangs of suspicion and terror. The security a solitude so sequestered might af-

ford to villains, created an alarm in the minds of the females, that almost bordered upon distraction. Alexo, in company with Bertram, began searching the apartment. They discovered nothing that at all confirmed their suspicions, until they lifted up an old piece of cloth which lay in a remote and dark corner of the building, when they discovered a coffin. Starting backwards, they appeared, as it were, chained to the spot with horror, which was perceived by Alphonso, who, suspecting something more than common was the cause, contrived to amuse the ladies, in such a manner, that they did not witness their attitudes. Alexo lifted up the lid of the coffin, and, to their utter astonishment, beheld the mutilated skeleton of a human being, a bloody female garment, and a couple of gold rings wrapped carefully in a small piece of paper, a pair of white satin slippers, ornamented with gold fringe, were placed at the feet, and on the right side stood a small silver lamp. At the sight of this uncommon spectacle, Alexo shuddered with involuntary horror. Bertram carefully closed the coffin, and, laying the pall over it, begged Alexo to secrecy, as to the discovery. A light now flashed in at an old window near the door. The hermit soon after appeared with Grado, whose blooming countenance was become more than delicately white, occasioned by terrors he had undergone since they parted with him in the cavern. As the night advanced, Bertram, anxious, from

the singular discovery he had made in the anchorite's apartment, to hear the history of his life, ventured to request he would fulfil his promise, and begin it. He readily assented; and, after trimming the lamp and heaping some fresh wood on the fire, related his narration as follows :

“ In the younger part of my life, I was passionately fond of gaming, a vice that too frequently entails upon its votaries distress and misery. It was my fate to be one of those unhappy wretches. I sighed in poverty, under the disgraceful appellations of a gambler and a knave. My friends, who had so often enchanted me with that deceitful flattery, which is in general lavished upon the man who revels in the company of those domestic robbers, with money and credulity, forsook me in my distress, and I was hurried by one of them to a prison. During my confinement, I contracted an intimacy with a Portuguese, of genteel address and insinuating manners, who, for some unknown reason, was confined by the state. He had a never failing purse, and we lived together in a state of affluence and luxury. One day he came into my room, as I was dressing to dine with him, and said,

“ I have received an order from the state for my liberty; and, if you will accompany me into Portugal, your debts shall be paid, and a future maintenance provided for you.”

“ To this unexpected proposal I readily

assented; and, after taking a jocular farewell of the prison, we proceeded to a tavern in the neighbourhood, and regaled ourselves upon the dainties of the host's pantry. My brother, by some unknown means informed of my release, sent a message, that he wished for an interview, upon particular business; but, being upon bad terms with him previous to my confinement, I declined visiting him, and dismissed a servant with a letter to that purport. He was avaricious, bigoted to his own opinion, a man of immoderate ambition, and passionately fond of women. To these vices he added contempt for the deity, mocked every mode of worship, and continually associated with men of abandoned and indifferent characters. My Portuguese friend advised me by all means to see him.

‘He is your brother,’ said he; ‘and, although he may have treated you in a manner unbecoming and imperious, yet the ties, by which you are connected, are so sacred, that no motive whatever should induce you to disregard them as mere formalities.’

“This speech operated upon me so powerfully, that I consented to his proposal, and we went together to his house. Our meeting was reserved. And when he heard of my good fortune, in having procured the esteem and friendship of the Portuguese, he became jealous, and now and then discovered the nature of his disposition, in sentences of irony, applied to me, and which

ill-suited to accommodate our disputes. We parted at night somewhat more friendly than we met, and the Portuguese, and myself, after bidding him farewell, went to the theatre. Before the curtain was drawn up, we entertained ourselves with indiscriminate remarks upon the company as they entered the boxes. Our inquiries and wonderings were continually answered by a little dapper sharp-fighted fellow, who appeared to know every individual, with more than common accuracy.

‘And who is that lady,’ said my friend, ‘so young and beautiful, and yet clothed in mourning?’

‘That is the wife of Don Roderigo, a noted libertine,’ said the man. ‘He has been married to her about seven days, gratified his desires, picked her pocket, and has now discarded her upon the unfounded charge of incontinence.’

“You may guess my astonishment, when I heard this barbarous accusation against my brother. But I knew him to be capable of executing any vicious project, if it appeared likely to benefit his finances. The scornful reproaches of mankind made no impressions on a mind like his, incapable of reflection, and a heart steeled against the dictates of honour and humanity.

“The curtain, at last, drew up, and indeed it was a lucky circumstance, for we found our acquaintance a most impertinent, loquacious fellow.

“We sat the play through, and then re-

tired to our hotel. In the morning, the Chevalier Rinandez, for that was my friend's name, received letters of importance, that recalled him, instantly, to Portugal, and for which kingdom we set out past the same evening. On our arrival in the city of Lisbon, I was introduced by the Chevalier, as his intimate friend and acquaintance, to the family where he resided. They received me with distinguished politeness, and a few weeks after I had been there, a young Spanish lady, accomplished and beautiful, paid me particular attention. She was an orphan, and possessed of considerable property in the province of Old Castile. Her insinuating manners, together with her personal beauty, failed not to force from me, in secret, the severest pangs of a growing passion. We frequently met, as by accident, in the solitary walks of the garden; and one evening, as we admired the beautiful scenery which surrounded us, a burst of passion overpowered the doubts we had hitherto mutually entertained of each other's affections; and, as the passage clouds dimmed the lustre of the moon, we sealed the bond of love with a thousand hallowed kisses. She then told me, the chevalier, my friend, was her guardian, and in possession of her property. We were about to converse on this subject in a small romantic temple, which was situated in the most secluded part of the shrubbery, when Rinandez entered the place: his cloak thrown carelessly over his right shoulder, his sword

under his arm, and his hat upon his brows; he darted a furious look at me, and then told me, with a menacing frown, that I had better leave Lisbon, without delay.

“Other wise,” said he “miscreant, you shall feel the most severe punishment, daring, as you have done, to wean this lady from her faith, by advising her to adopt a system of heretical opinions. What can you expect from the powerful authority that guards, with a jealous eye, the beloved institution of our catholic religion? What can you expect,—villain?”

“I was struck with the most profound astonishment, and, indignant at the manner in which he delivered his sentiments, began to remonstrate, rather severely, against so unprincipled and ill-founded a charge. I endeavoured to explain the matter, but in vain; he rushed from the temple, and exclaimed, as he left us—

“You will repent your hypocrisy.”

“My God!” said Laurentina, “what is to become of us?”

“No time was to be lost. I persuaded her not to return to the house, but to quit the garden, by a wicket that led into the public street; and, proceeding immediately to the Spanish ambassador’s house, related to him a faithful account of the whole circumstance, and begged his excellency’s protection and interference. He appeared sensible of my innocence; for, having a perfect knowledge of the hasty tempers of the Portuguese, he naturally concluded that the

chevalier had been led away by passion. He desired us to remain in the house whilst he sent for Rinandez, and discussed the subject with him. After some time, he made his appearance, and the whole affair was argued before the ambassador; he was completely in my favour, and the chevalier was dismissed with ignominy. The next morning we were married; and, the affair being buzzed about the city, a letter was dropped at the door of the hotel where we resided, directed for me; on opening it, the contents were as follows:

‘ BROTHER SPANIARD,

‘ The Chevalier Rinandez is a villain.
 ‘ The lady’s property is in his hands; and,
 ‘ without you make application to the Spanish ambassador, to have it restored, all
 ‘ efforts will be in vain. A monk, by name
 ‘ father Anthony, a mischievous, deceitful
 ‘ villain of the order of St. Benedict, is concerned with him. If you should want any
 ‘ evidence to corroborate this, proclaim the
 ‘ receipt of the letter in the market-place; I
 ‘ shall be at hand: but, without that, you
 ‘ will never hear of me more. Farewel.’

‘ *A Spanish Victim to the Chevalier’s cruelty.*’

“ This letter surprised me beyond conception: but, the mode it pointed out, for the recovery of the property, was so judicious, that I did not hesitate a moment, to comply with the injunction, and carried it to the ambassador. He read it over with astonishment, and, taking me with him to

the prime minister, influenced him in my favour. He immediately sent an order to an officer of the Inquisition to seize Father Anthony, the monk in league with the chevalier. This fiat was punctually executed, and the trembling friar brought before his excellency. After a few questions had been put to him, he discovered the whole of the chevalier's villany, and also the place of his retreat. Officers were sent after him; but he had gained intelligence of Father Anthony's arrest, and had fled the city. He left a trunk directed for me, if I should be heard of in two months; and which was brought by the officers to the palace of the minister. On its being opened, the writings of my wife's estate in Castile were found, a large bag of pistoles, and a golden hilted dagger, with this laconic note—

“ Take your right, fair lady! The pistoles
 ‘ will carry you to Spain, and the dagger
 ‘ will serve Angelo in time of danger. He
 ‘ will soon be rewarded, for the trouble he
 ‘ has taken to ruin you, and disgrace me.”

‘ R.’

“ This threat had very little effect upon my spirits. The idea of being in possession of my wife's property, sufficiently consoled me, and chased away every unpleasant anticipation that arose in my mind, in consequence of this letter. After returning my grateful acknowledgments for the civility shewn me by the ambassador, I went to my

lodgings, and shewed my wife the contents of the trunk; who was overjoyed to a degree, at finding me in possession of so valuable and unexpected a repository. I shall digress a little from my own history, and relate how this chevalier became guardian to Laurentina. He had been upon sincere terms of intimacy with her father, who died very rich at his castle, in the province of Old Castile, whilst the chevalier was on a visit to him. The old gentleman, on his death bed, recommended the care of his beloved daughter to the Chevalier de Rinandez, who faithfully promised to be her friend and protector through life. Dazzled with the idea of being the guardian of so inestimable a treasure, he wrote a letter, from Madrid, to his friend, Father Anthony, who recommended him to Father Jerome, a friar of the order of St. Dominic, in that city, for advice. He waited upon him, and, after shewing him the letter of Father Anthony, related an account of his good fortune, and expressing also his intention of making the orphan Laurentina his wife.

“The subtle friar conceived this to be an injudicious plan to obtain his ends, and advised him to place Laurentina in a convent in Portugal, pay the abbess a good round sum for her maintenance, and enjoy the remaining part of the property, free and unincumbered. This iniquitous proposal elated the abandoned Rinandez beyond conception; and, repairing to the castle, he sent Laurentina, under the protection of

a faithful servant, to Lisbon, and ordered him to lodge her in the house of Donna Melinda, an old procurefs of his acquaintance, until his arrival. As Rinandez was one evening crossing the street in which he lodged, a man seized him by the collar, and carried him to prison. The friar, alarmed for his friend's safety, procured (through his Inquisitorial interest) his release; but no person, not even Rinandez himself, ever knew the cause of his arrest and confinement. This accident procured me his friendship, and the consequent adventures you are in possession of.

" My wife now insisted upon leaving Lisbon for her native country. The family castle being now in my possession, I determined to reside there, and dispatched domestics to prepare it for our reception, as it had not been inhabited by any person but a poor farmer and his family, since her father's death. We arrived at the castle, after an agreeable journey, early in the evening of a very fine summer's day. The approach to it was through a valley surrounded by the wild scenery of nature: a venerable ruin, as we passed it, silvered with age, threw me into an enthusiastic rapture; and, naturally fond of romantic edifices, I saw the departing beams of the sun reflected by the glittering vanes upon the towers, with more than common admiration. As the great gate opened to receive us, the old hoary porter added to the beauty

of the castle: we were welcomed with a profusion of low bows and congratulations, and a good fire blazed in the hall, to comfort us, as we regaled ourselves upon the dainties set before us by the peasant. My life now became the scene of unbounded pleasure. Laurentina, with that unaccountable delight with which the mind is often impressed, on revisiting scenes where the days of childhood glided away in the enjoyment of unrestrained felicity, wept, as she seated herself in the room appropriated by her mother for her education; and passed the hours of evening in visiting the galleries and chambers of the castle, and, pointing out to me, as we wandered through the beautiful vistas of the garden, the particular spot that her mother frequented.

“When, thro’ the tall trees’ foliage in the wave,
The light of many stars reflected shone;
And lonely Philomel, with plaintive song,
Cheer’d the wild paths of Solitude.”

“Three years were spent in uninterrupted bliss; and a beautiful boy was the fruit of our mutual loves. One night, when the family had retired to rest, I was alarmed by a loud knocking at the outer gate of the castle: I rose, and dressed myself; and, as I was descending the great staircase, the porter rapped at the hall door, and informed me that three or four travellers were at the gate, and amongst them, he said, was my brother. This circumstance greatly astonished me, for I had heard nothing of him since we separated at Madrid, previous to

my departure for Lisbon with the chevalier. I accompanied the porter to the tower window, and by the light of my lamp, discovered my brother, mounted on horseback, and attended by three or four domestics armed, and two other persons. On seeing Roderigo, I ordered the gate to be unbarred, and admitted them into the courtyard. Although the treatment I had received from him rather merited my reproach and scorn, yet, conscious of the infallibility of human nature, I received him with all the ardour of friendship, and a friar, who accompanied him, with respectful civility. He made a thousand apologies, for not paying me a visit before, but said in excuse, that he had been to the settlements in Hispaniola, upon important business for the state, and had not returned to Madrid above two months. I knew he was connected with a party of vicious young noblemen, who hovered about the court; and, therefore, did not doubt the truth of his story. After they had refreshed themselves upon some cold venison, and the best wine in my cellar, lamps were provided for them, and each was shewn into his apartment for the night. In the morning I introduced Laurentina to my brother, and his friend, the friar. We passed several days in great conviviality and friendship, and the night preceding the day fixed for my brother's return to the capital, as we were at supper, Laurentina, after tasting some wine in a

goblet, presented to her by one of the monk's servants, suddenly shrieked aloud, and, falling back in her chair, apparently expired in strong convulsions. Every effort to recover her was ineffectual; and she was carried a corpse to the cedar chamber. It is impossible for me to describe my situation of mind. I raved about the castle in a state of disconsolate fury, wept every hour over the body of my unfortunate wife, and pressed my lips to her's, cold with the icy touch of death, in a state of melancholy distraction. My brother endeavoured to console me with his accursed ideas of religion, and the monk continually exhorted me to patience, and obedience to my Maker's authority. About the hour of midnight I rose from my bed, and, entering the chamber where the body was deposited, seated myself in a chair by the bed side, to indulge my sorrows uninterrupted. In the act of contemplating a picture of *Laurentina*, when a child, which was placed over the chimney-piece, I heard with some emotion, a voice exclaim—

“God Almighty! where am I?”

“There was an awful pause for some minutes, during which time I looked upon my situation with the deepest horror.

“My trembling limbs could scarce support me; for every sound, which disturbed the silence of the night, pierced me to the very soul. I was retiring from the room, wrapt in the gloom of conjecture and distress, when something flapped against the

window, and, as I turned my head to discover the cause, I beheld a hand, feebly endeavouring to draw back the curtain of the bed ; my lamp dropt upon the floor, and rushing from the chamber, I fled with the greatest precipitation to my brother's room, where I found Roderigo, and the monk, in deep consultation. They started with confusion and surprise, when I entered the apartment, breathless, and, as you may conceive, my countenance distorted with horror. I related my story, as well as I could, and saw them look at each other with significant frowns ; but they at length endeavoured to ascribe my feelings to the dreams of a bewildered imagination. As I stood shuddering by the side of my brother's chair, expecting to see the spirit enter, the hall echoed with loud and piercing shrieks.— They fled instantly, with the lamp, to the spot, and the apparent spectre of Laurentina presented itself before them. The monk made his escape ; but, as my brother passed her, she caught hold of his cloak, and, throwing herself on her knees, begged of him, in the most endearing manner, not to leave her to perish. The horror, this circumstance occasioned, almost deprived him of his senses ; he called aloud for help ; no one appeared : he attempted to disengage himself ; but she resisted his efforts with impassioned prayers. He groaned with horror, and was on the point of falling senseless on the ground, when she called him by his name, and wept. Her tone of voice, her

manner, her steady adherence to her first request, and the colour that now spread itself over her palid countenance, encouraged him to conquer his fears, and satisfy himself as to the reality of Laurentina. He put a question to her. She answered it, with earnest inquiries for me and her child. He called aloud for the servants, but the dreadful idea of meeting the spirit of Laurentina had caused them all precipitately to fly from the castle. Altho' I was witness to the whole transaction, I could not recover myself sufficiently to assist him, but on hearing his voice again I entered the hall, and was instantly encircled in the cold arms of Laurentina. My situation can more easily be conceived than described. The form of my beloved wife, wrapped in its shroud, her face, so often the subject of delightful contemplation, pale, and bandaged with the fillet of death, struck me with incredible horror: I pressed her to my bosom, the quick palpitation of the heart convinced me she lived.

'I am cold and weary,' she exclaimed; 'let me to bed.'

"The servants had by this time returned to the castle, and she was immediately put into a warm bed, and several balsamic medicines administered. She soon fell into a tranquil sleep, and I left her under the care of an old domestic, and went down to my brother and the friar, who, I was told, were in the garden parlour. On entering the room, I discovered, with astonishment, one of his servants lying on the ground,

weltering in his blood. He waved his hand for me to approach him, when he spoke in the following terms:

‘ In me you discover the wretch who attempted to poison Laurentina. It was by the order of Rinandez, who personates the monk. Beware of his villany! If I had succeeded, you was to have been dispatched to night. Your brother is, by profession, a robber, and connected with a desperate gang of villains that infest the neighbouring forests. They will arrive here, in an hour, by appointment. Rinandez has stabbed me, in his anger, for failing in the execution of the deed.—Oh God!’

“ The ruffian turned upon his side and expired. I rushed from the room to Laurentina’s apartment, and I entered the chamber with impatient distress. I discovered the monk, coming from the bed side, with a poniard crimsoned with blood, in his right hand. On seeing me in the room, he drew back the curtains, and beheld my unfortunate wife in the agonies of death, from two stabs she had received in her right breast. He darted a furious look at me, and stripping off his habit—

‘ Behold!’ said he, ‘ the man whom you, whilst basking in the sunshine of his friendship, disgraced and ruined; but the hour of retribution is arrived.’

“ As he exultingly stretched forth his hand, which grasped the dagger, still reeking with the blood of innocence, I seized him by the throat, and dashed him on the

ground. The violence of the fall enabled me to wrest the poniard from his hand, and, as he poured forth his blasphemous execrations, I plunged it deep in his heart. The awful time of night, and the death-like stillness which reigned in the chamber, impressed me, as I stood between the bodies, with feelings never to be described; but, when I turned, and beheld *Laurentina*, a beauteous victim to the resentment of a barbarous villain, I stamped upon the body of *Rinandez*, and repeatedly stabbed it, amidst the wild ravings of despair. Unconscious of my perilous situation, I stretched myself upon the bed, in the agony of grief, by the side of *Laurentina's* bleeding corpse; at that moment the alarm was rung with great violence. Under an idea that my servants were coming to assist me, I rushed into the gallery, and, Oh God! saw, with the deepest anguish, my helpless child hurried, by two ruffians, through the hall into the court-yard. Concluding they were his murderers, I raised the poniard to my heart, and, as I was about to end my miserable existence, the blaze of torches burst through the gothic windows in the hall. In an instant I saw my brother rush in at the folding doors, with a naked sword in his hand, followed by five or six ruffians—

‘*Rinandez*,’ he cried, ‘and some of our fellows have dispatched the domestics. *Angelo* is our prey: he must be found, ere I can call the castle mine.’

“My desperate situation gave fresh vigour

to my almost expiring senses. I hastily returned to the bloody chamber, and wrapping the body of Laurentina in the monkish habit of Rinandez, took it in my arms, and fled down a private staircase into the subterraneous passage which led to a pile of ruins at no great distance from the castle, and from which I penetrated by a private pathway, to a wild recess in the neighbouring mountains.

“ Here, as the moon shone through the branches of the shrubs that grew upon the rock, I knelt by the body of my wife, and devoted many hours to prayer; and when morning broke, I sought out the most private cavern in the rock, and secreted myself in it, until the approach of evening, when stripping off the bloody robe, I buried the body of Laurentina in a dell, where the earliest flowers of spring grow, in the most beautiful and wild luxuriance. The habit of Rinandez served me as a disguise, and I passed into this province as a wandering and distressed friar, determined to end my days in the gloom of solitude. I was cheerfully admitted into a convent of the *Fratres Misericordiæ*, and have been ever since supported by the order. My melancholy turn of mind became the subject of their surprise and compassion; and to free myself from any inquiries, which might tend to discover the cause of my sorrow, I requested permission to retire into this solitude, and to attend daily at the monastery for devotion and sustenance. My request was

instantly gratified, and many long tedious years have I lived, secluded from society, in this remote and unfrequented place. My affliction has been, in some measure, solaced by the idea that a just God will, one day, avenge my calamities, and, in his mercy, pardon the murder of Rinandez, — for no slumber seals the eye of Providence. — Every year, on the eve of the Nativity, have I made a pilgrimage to the secret tomb, where the body of my beloved wife mouldered in the unhallowed dell, and brought back as many bones as I could conceal. In a sepulchre, amongst the ruins of this abbey, I discovered a coffin entire, and moving it into this part of the building, deposited in it, the bloody garment, the bones of Laurentina, and the dagger, with which I dispatched the villain Rinandez.”

He rose from his seat, and, pointing to the coffin—

“Yonder,” he continued, “is the monument of my heart-rending misfortunes. Nightly, by the side of that awful spectacle, I pray for the repose of Laurentina’s spirit, and make it my pillow, when, fatigued with watching, I drop into broken slumbers. When I last visited the tomb, I approached near the castle, to take a last farewell of a residence once the seat of uninterrupted happiness and connubial bliss, but found it reduced to ashes, by fire, and the spot totally deserted. My meditations, as I gazed upon the ruins, were those of a philosopher taught in the school of misfortune,

how little must be expected from gratifying the intemperate calls of ambition, and how vain the boast of one moment's happiness."

"Merciful God!" cried Alexo, "do I find in this miserable habitation, and cloathed with this wretched apparel, a father?"

Exclamations of horror and surprise burst from the other travellers. Whilst Alexo, almost insensible with rapture and astonishment, fell at the feet of Don Angelo, and bathed, with his tears, the hand of his disconsolate and unfortunate father. Alexo recollected, with horror, the bloody chamber they entered, when in search of Cle-anthe, little suspecting, at the time he was surveying it, that it had flowed from the body of his murdered mother. He approached the coffin—

"And are these the remains of the unfortunate Laurentina?" he exclaimed, with an affectionate sigh.

Although torn from her at an early age, the faint recollection of her endearing sympathy for him when a child, united with the tenderest feelings for her fate, caused him to feel the most acute sensations of distress. His father, who had now recovered from the unexpected shock his senses had sustained by the discovery of his son, came to him, and, with tender admonitions, persuaded him to leave the coffin.

"You have seen, my father," said Alexo, "but one instance of my uncle's cruelty; I

Yol

have been witness to many ; for he was advised to acts of villany, by that fiend of hell, the friar of St. Dominic."

Alexo now repeated to his father every incident that had happened to him, since he arrived at the age, when the mind is capable, by reflection, of feeling the severities of misfortune.

"My uncle," said he, "has, by this time, expiated his crime upon the scaffold. His daring robberies, and cruel treatment to the unhappy sufferers that fell into his power, have, at last, deprived the libertine of existence. He restored to me, previous to his condemnation, the writings belonging to an estate in Estremadura. I am now going to Arragon, to reside with this lady, to whom I am espoused, upon the family estate of Don Alphonso, her father."

Alexo then questioned Angelo, how Roderigo became possessed of the title to an estate in Estremadura, and the reason why he did not revenge his unnatural cruelties, by an application to the officers of justice, for apprehending Roderigo, and bringing him to trial ?

"The deeds he gave you," said he, "belong to his own property, gained by his villany. Too well aware, that father Jerome was his adviser in the business, I was confident that his influence in the Inquisition would have effectually prevailed over truth and justice, and that I should have sold a victim to my own temerity, if I had made application for his arrest. I there-

fore was determined to seek out a solitude, where I might spend the remainder of my days in reflection and tranquillity; and, if an opportunity never offered to be revenged upon him, to die in obscurity."

The party were alarmed at an unusual noise, behind a mouldering pedestal, some little distance from where the coffin stood; but, on searching the spot, they discovered it was poor Grado, fast asleep, and snoring insufferably loud.

The near approach of morn was announced by a clock in the neighbouring convent: and the party, after a little refreshing sleep, roused Grado from his hallowed repository, to prepare the beasts and carriage for the journey. Don Angelo was, with great difficulty, persuaded to leave his favorite melancholy haunt, and retire with his son to the chateau, at some distance, in the province: but, before he complied with the request, he begged that Alexo would accompany him to the spot where he intended to deposit Laurentina's remains. They bore the coffin, on their shoulders, to a monument, situated in a retired and gloomy part of the ruin. An undulating stream, which flowed near it, refreshed the profusion of violets that grew beside its course; the tall cypress sheltered the silent walk from observation; and the mournful gloom of the surrounding scenery realized, in effect, the beautiful exclamation of an inimitable author.

"Oh! bear me, then, to vast embow'ring shades,
 To twilight groves, and visionary vales;
 To weeping grottoes, and prophetic gloom,
 Where angel forms athwart the solemn dusk
 Tremendous sweep, or seem to sweep along,
 And voices, more than human, through the void
 Deep sounding, seize th' enthusiastic ear."

Angelo, after rolling away some mossy fragments from the entrance of the sepulchre, deposited in it the coffin with its contents, and fixed the following inscription over it:

In this Coffin
 rest the mouldering bones of
LAURENTINA,
 a native of Old Castile,
 and wife of **DON ANGELO:**
 She was murdered, at the instigation of Don Roderigo,
 her brother in law,
 by Iago Rináñez, a cruel assassin.
 To these solitudes
 the unfortunate husband fled for safety,
 and from
 the powers of the Inquisition,
 and wasted many years in melancholy reflection.

They carefully closed the entrance, and retired. The morning had now brightened the east with a beautiful variety of tints, and the air, as they passed through the grove of cypress, was enriched with the fragrance of the dewy flowers that bloomed beside the pathway. Alexo listened, with enthusiastic delight, to the parting song of the nightingales, and the morning hymn of the monks, as it swelled, faintly, at intervals, along the valley. When they had reached the habitation amongst the ruins, they found every thing in readiness for their

departure. Don Angelo, after diminishing his beard, wrapped himself in Alexo's cloak, and became quite spruce for a travelling companion. He only took with him his books, leaving his cell ready furnished, for the next unfortunate anchorite, who may secrete himself in the ruins.

CHAPTER XI.

"Thou know'st how guiltless first I met thy flame,
When love approach'd me under friendship's name;
My fancy form'd thee of angelic kind,
Some emanation of th' all beauteous mind."—POPE.

IN the enjoyment of a season of happiness, we sometimes forget that life is surrounded by events, hid in the womb of time, that may one day infallibly destroy our comfort. The Marchioness of Meridas looked not for the morrow, and appeared a stranger to anticipation or reflection.—Don Castellio, a cavalier of inferior fortune, but a friend of the marquis, was introduced into the castle, and resided there as one of the family. On a sudden, his natural vivacity forsook him, and he became fond of retirement, thoughtful and dejected. This unaccountable change in his disposition appeared to create a great degree of alarm in the mind of the marquis; for he was constantly seen walking with him in the grounds about the castle, apparently in deep and earnest conversation, and usually passed the greater part of the night in Castellio's chamber. The marquis was suddenly

called to Madrid upon important business; and, one evening, as the marchioness was sitting alone in her library, Don Castellio unexpectedly entered the apartment. He presented her with some flowers; and, after the usual expressions of politeness had passed between them, and some unimportant observations upon the weather, a mutual silence for some minutes ensued. Castellio at length drew a letter from his pocket, and, delivering it to the marchioness, precipitately quitted the room: she received it with surprise, and, opening it, read with the greatest astonishment, the following words:

“It is in vain that I endeavour to endure my sorrows in retirement, when the cause of my distress continues so near to me. Oh! that it were possible for me to forget her! My friendship for Meridas dictates to me the necessity of such a resolution; but I am unable to accomplish it. I respect him, I revere him; but (diabolical thought) cannot resist the cruel desire of sacrificing his happiness to the completion of mine. What an idea! You start and shudder at the sentence. But forgive me, my adored Florella, forgive me, when I declare that I love you to distraction.”

At this moment, the consciousness of her inability to resist the threats of Castellio, if, in the fury of his misguided and dishonourable passion, he should endeavour to accomplish by stratagem and force, what he could not in any way effect by persua-

sion and flattery, struck her with the most forcible degree of horror. She ordered her servant to sleep in her chamber that night; and, the next morning, addressed the following note to Castellio:

“ I will not listen to the avowal of a passion that I hold dishonourable and impious. Forget me, and let this affair sink in oblivion.”

He read it with the severest pangs of disappointment. His affection, as by magic, was changed to disgust and hatred. But as, in the height of sorrow, he meditated upon revenge, she crossed the great walk in the garden. The fiends of resentment immediately forsook him, fleeing as it were before an increased influence of his passion. He followed her hastily through a solitude in the garden, and discovered that she entered a romantic tower near the canal.

“ Why,” he exclaimed, “ should I suffer myself to be the dupe of misguided principles? Are the laws of friendship so sacred as to be revered in opposition to the finer feelings of the soul. Oh, no! She must—she shall consent.”

The door was open, and, entering the apartment with a cautious step, he had seated himself by her side, ere she perceived him.

“ My God!” she exclaimed, “ as she hastily rose from her seat, is it Castellio?”

“ It is Castellio; and it is the man who adores you. It is he who means to sacrifice his life at your feet, if you resist his desires.”

He took her by the hand, and was going to press it to his lips, when she forcibly disengaged it, and exclaimed, in a tone of indignant resentment—

“Villain, forbear! Recollect yourself. Are you not the friend of my husband?”

“I do confess it. To him I own I am indebted for many trivial favours; but to me he owes his existence. If you love him, you will preserve his life, by dividing your affection. There is a secret, which, if told abroad, would doom him to instant death. I am in possession of it. He is not the Marquis de la Meridas, but—”

At this moment the door was burst open, and the marquis stood before them. He looked upon Castellio with an angry frown, and, taking his wife by the hand, conducted her, almost speechless, for with horror, to the castle. He there interrogated her, with severity, respecting the conversation he had overheard, and insisted upon her disclosing to him every circumstance that had happened to her since his absence. She delivered to him Castellio's letter, and her answer. A sudden contraction of his brows, together with the paleness which overspread his countenance, were sufficient indications of his feelings. She trembled for the consequences.

“I shall return,” said he, imperiously, “to the castle, about sun set.”

The marchioness now, for the first time, experienced the most acute sensations of distrust and alarm; the mysterious lan-

guage of Castellio, the thoughtful appearance of the marquis, together with the secret conferences which she had observed them hold, in unfrequented avenues, convinced her, that some matters of importance must soon, inevitably, be discovered. As she sat, pensively, at her chamber window, which looked into the garden, she observed Castellio, wrapt in his cloak, and wandering, as if melancholy, along the borders of a rivulet, which flowed near a vista to the canal. As he approached the castle, she heard him say with emphasis—

“He will not long interrupt me in the attainment of my wishes: the murder shall be disclosed.”

At the word, murder, she almost sunk upon the floor.

“This mystery,” she exclaimed, “cannot be long concealed.”

She had scarce uttered the sentence, when the marquis entered the chamber. Immediately she related to him, with unaffected concern, what had happened. Her artless questions drew from him the sign of guilt. He turned abruptly from her, and, apparently forgetful of his situation, paced up and down the room, as one wild with distress, uttering, at intervals, deep sighs, and exclamations, of—Oh God! the villain! I wish I was in my grave!

He desired to be alone that night, and, early in the evening, retired to rest. About midnight he arose, and, arming himself with his sword, left his chamber, and proceeded

to a gloomy solitude in the grounds of the castle. He there met Castellio by appointment.

"Castellio," he exclaimed, as he approached him, "is a villain. My confederate and supposed friend, to play the hypocrite, is what I never expected. And why this sudden revolution in his character? Can I not account for it? Oh, yes! It is but too true, that the adored object of my heart is the talisman which draws forth his damning accusation. But she is proof against the charm. Castellio will find her firmer than Lucretia in the support of chastity. Could he find no other method to bring down the severest penalties of justice on his friend, or to alienate the affections of his wife, than by disclosing to the world the murder of the marquis? Castellio has debased the character of a man, by such a thought; and by threatening to publish it to the world, proved himself an inconsiderate and worthless scoundrel; for he was present at the deed, and assisted in the execution of it."

"I did so; and acknowledge the justice of your reproaches. But have I shared, equally, with you, the reward of our iniquity? Had I not a right to expect a joint distribution of the property we acquired by such an act?"

"Vile dissembler!" cried the marquis, as he drew the letter from his pocket, "dare you disavow the real and hellish motives which urged you on to betray me, when I

hold such an infallible and damning proof of it in my hand? But mark me, Castellio, from this hour I cancel the bond of our friendship; and, so far from fearing your hellish designs, I dare you to the worst. Villain, I do. Beware of my revenge."

He hastily quitted the solitude, and retired to the castle. Early in the morning two men rapped at the great gate, and inquired for the marquis. They were admitted into his chamber, and held a private conference with him for some time. After the departure of the men, he visited the marchioness, and found her in a state of gloomy melancholy. Suspecting the cause to arise from the interruption he had given to the declarations of Castellio, in a moment the horrid fiend of jealousy took possession of his mind; and, grasping her by the hand, hurried her to the South Tower, and confined her in a room that had not been inhabited for many years.

"Your gallant, your adored Castellio, shall soon be with you," he exclaimed, as he led her into the chamber with a supercilious smile.

In vain did she protest her innocence before the face of heaven; in vain did she resist his efforts to leave her, with the most piercing entreaties and tears: he thrust her indignantly from his side, and closed the door, in the violence of his brutal temper.

As the darkness of the chamber was faintly illuminated by the rays of the sun, which shone through a crevice in the decayed

boards that barricaded up the window, objects continually glided before her eyes; and voices, as of people in extreme distress, seemed to echo along the apartment. Overpowered with the effect of these dreadful sensations, she sunk lifeless upon the floor. She recovered, alas! but to endure torments of the most horrid nature; for, as she burst into tears, a faint groan, uttered by some one in the apartment, pierced her to the very soul.

“Gracious God!” she exclaimed, “am I not alone?”

She listened attentively for some time, expecting by that means to discover from whence the noise proceeded; but a continued silence only ensued.

“I am innocent of any crime,” she cried, “that can rouse the sleeping dead from the grave. What then have I to fear?”

She fancied she heard footsteps ascending the stairs in the tower; and, in exploring her way to the door, to call for assistance, the groan was repeated. She remained for some time fixed to the spot, with sensations almost bordering upon distraction; at length a voice exclaimed,

“Oh, Florella! pardon me, forgive the injuries you have suffered from the hands of your dying husband.”

At this word she rent the room with loud and dreadful shrieks, and sunk upon the body in a state of insensibility. Alarmed by her cries, the domestics of the castle ran instantly to Castelli's chamber, and com-

municated the circumstance to him. They entered the tower with some degree of courage; but when they heard the groans of Gazala (the real name of the marquis,) in a moment the room was deserted by all but Castellio. He proceeded to the chamber, and, on opening the door, found the miserable Florella bending over the body of her husband. He seized her by the arm, and was dragging her from the tower, when he heard old Rigo, the vociferous gardener, and most courageous of the whole household, ascending the stairs, and condemning the dastardly behaviour of his fellow servants in vehement language.

Castellio escaped, by rushing upon him as he entered the room, and extinguishing his lamp. The fellow, however, followed him through the gallery; but, unable to come up with him, returned to the kitchen, and, relating the circumstance to his fellow servants, desired them to accompany him with lights. They instantly complied with his request, and, on opening the door of the tower, with great astonishment discovered their lady weeping by the side of Gazala, who was weltering in his blood.

He was immediately removed to his chamber, and a surgeon sent for, to examine his wounds. He pronounced them mortal, and advised him to be attended by a confessor. A father, from a convent of white penitents in the neighbourhood, was sent for; who, being left alone with him, heard,

with the utmost astonishment, the following declaration.

“ I lived for some years in the capacity of confidential servant to the Marquis de la Meridas, who resided at Strasburgh in Germany. His behaviour to me was more like a father than a master; and, upon his accession to his castle, and the property of the Asturas family, he appointed me chief superintendant of his affairs. I by that means became possessed of his papers, and from them learned that his brother was confined in the bastille at Paris, for some trivial offence, and that his relations lived at the extremity of Andalusia. As we travelled through Germany, on our way to Spain, Castellio, a favorite footman of the marquis's, concerted a plan whereby we might possess ourselves, for some time, of the marquis's estates. He communicated his designs to me, and I readily acceded to the proposal. We frequently travelled through forests during the night for dispatch; and, as we rode along the pathway of one of these dreadful solitudes, I suddenly called out to the marquis to stop, pretending that his horse's shoe was loose.

“ He immediately dismounted, and that instant we seized him by the throat, and strangled him with a whip. This mode of perpetrating the deed was adopted to prevent the clothes being stained with blood; for I was obliged to dress myself in his apparel, to personate him with success. After throwing the body into a pit almost filled

with stagnated water, we rode furiously through the forest, and travelled with the greatest expedition until we arrived at the castle.

“ As the marquis had never been seen by any of the domestics, or the peasantry who lived upon the estate, I was welcomed with great joy and festivity. By a course of reflection, however, I became harassed with the enormity of my crime, and usually spent the greater part of the day in a round of dissipation, and every night retired to rest in a state of intoxication, purposely to avoid the horrors of conscience. Unable to bear the load of guilt which continually oppressed me, I repaired frequently to Madrid, in order to avoid reflection; and, one day, as I was attending to a procession of nuns that passed through the chapel of the Augustine friars, the uncommon beauty of one of the vestals struck me with such forcible admiration, that I determined to hazard an intrigue with her. I waited the return of the procession, which was about dark; and, as it passed under the gloomy porch of the chapel, I contrived to slip into her hand a billet, which contained an avowal of my passion, promises to maintain her in magnificence and wealth, and signed myself the Marquis of Meridas. I pressed on to the gate of the convent, and, stationing myself by one of the towers, heard her whisper, as she passed me, “ Go to the South wicket.” I immediately flew to the

place of rendezvous, and, after waiting some considerable time, heard several persons near the door, apparently in earnest conversation; they soon however separated, and I waited with great impatience for the expected arrival of my Dulcinea; but no one appeared: at length, however, a billet was thrown over the wall; and, on opening it, I found it contained a severe censure upon my audacity, and begged I would not interrupt the meditations of a mind devoted to solitude, with the false professions of a dissolute passion, and licentious ideas. Chagrined in the extreme by this remonstrance, I returned to my lodging, and consulted with Castellio upon the step to be pursued. He recommended me to persevere, and procure, if possible, an interview. In conducting this plan, we used a variety of artifices without success; but one night, made desperate by long continued disappointments, I placed myself upon the wall of the garden, and observed a light glimmering through the windows of the chapel. Forgetful of so rash a proceeding, I descended into the garden, and, tracing my way to the sanctuary, climbed up to one of the casements, and, with the greatest pleasure and astonishment, discovered the adored object of my love, trimming a lamp at a small sepulchre under the window. Enraptured by this fortunate circumstance, I was about to enter the chapel, when she left the place, and, with a lighted taper, proceeded down a solitary walk in the garden. I overtook

her, and, extinguishing the light, declared myself to be the person who had addressed the billet to her ; that my love was honourable, and, if an application to the abbess would not have any effect, I would procure a dispensation from the pope to release her from her religious obligations. Fear almost overpowered her senses."

"The time of prayer," said she, "is nearly arrived, and, if I am discovered, inevitable destruction will be the consequence: permit me to return to the convent now, and I promise to meet you by the South Tower, to-morrow night at twelve. I embraced her ; she struggled with apparent reluctance: but when my lips met hers, she pressed my hand with sympathetic ardour, and, wishing me a good night, fled to her cell. I immediately gained the wall, and, descending into the street, retired hastily to my lodging, and repeated the whole adventure to Castellio. The next night I was loitering near the monastery some time before the clock struck twelve, and passed away the time in listening to a band of serenaders who were passing under the convent walls. When the long expected hour arrived, I ascended the wall, and in a few moments witnessed the appearance of my beloved Florella. St. Anna, at that moment, rushed between us with a drawn dagger.

"St. Anna!" uttered the friar, with a deep sigh.

“ You know her, then, father ?” continued the penitent. “ She is the mother of my wife.”

“ Merciful God !” he cried, as he sunk back in his chair, “ is the beautiful Florella the wife of a murderer ?”

Gazala remained silent for some time, when the monk, who had recovered from his surprise, desired him to proceed.

“ I imposed myself upon the abbess for the Marquis of Meridas, by means of forged letters from Don John De Modena, brother to the lady Asturias. I could plainly perceive that these testimonials had great weight with her, and pushing on my suit with all the eloquence I was master of, at last obtained her consent to marry her daughter, and the nuptials were celebrated privately at midnight in the chapel belonging to her own convent. The innocence and beauty of my wife soon changed a lawless passion to sincere affection, and we lived in uninterrupted happiness until Castellio became enamoured with her charms, and, to eradicate her regard for me, threatened to disclose to her the murder of the marquis. I reproved him for his villany, and, resolving to be revenged upon so perfidious a wretch, hired two assassins to murder him, at midnight, in his bed ; but they, in expectation of receiving another reward from him, disclosed the secret ; and in the evening, as I wandered in one of the avenues, they came in company with Castellio, and, stabbing me in several places, left me for dead

in the walk. I laid for some time bleeding on the ground, when the ruffians returned, and, taking me in their arms, carried me to what is called the Haunted Chamber in the South Tower, and threw me, with great violence, on the floor. I had, in a fit of jealousy, confined my wife in that chamber. It was a barbarous and inhuman proceeding; but proved a most fortunate circumstance, for, on hearing my groans, she drew the servants to the tower by violent shrieks. The villain, Castellio, accompanied them; and, seeing her by my side, he rushed upon her, and was dragging her from the chamber, when the gardener appeared, and prevented him. He has fled the castle, but may yet be lurking about the grounds; and, to your paternal care I recommend my beloved Florella."

During the conclusion of Gahala's confession, the friar was wrapt in thought, but when the name of Florella was mentioned, he burst into a flood of tears; and, turning almost frantic to Gahala,

"You have committed," said he, "unpardonable crimes. The comfort I can bestow upon you, through the means of religion, will be small indeed; but it shall be administered."

After he had given him absolution, Gahala inquired particularly for Florella, and begged to see her.

The friar trembled, and persuaded him to the contrary. He rang his bell however with great violence; and, after a few mi-

minutes had elapsed in perfect silence, the sound of footsteps echoed along the gallery.

The friar hastily quitted his seat, and was proceeding to the door, when it opened, and the disconsolate Florella entered the apartment. His face was instantly smothered in his cowl; and, passing by her with an agitated step, he gained the gallery, ere he recollected that he had left a book upon the table, with his name written at length in the title page. He returned to the chamber, where he heard Gazala speak as follows—

“My life, Florella, is drawing towards a close, and to that holy friar I have recommended you for protection.”

She burst into tears.

“I have been foully murdered by Castellio. I am not the real Marquis of Meridas, but practised that abominable artifice upon your mother, and forged letters from Don John de Modena, to induce her to consent to our union, as I discovered from her own declarations, that she had been treated by the Asturias family with more than common respect.”

He appeared at this moment to be fainting: the friar ran to the bed side; but he was struggling with the agonies of death. For some time he lay speechless, and apparently in great torture; when, endeavouring to rise in his bed, he fell back upon his pillow, and expired in dreadful convulsions. The situation of Florella can better be conceived than described; for such is

the character of the female sex in many instances, that although they are oppressed with injuries, and treated more like slaves, than objects who are entitled to our protection and regard, they continue their attachments with unshaken fidelity; seeking, in the hour of distress, to meliorate, by attention and sympathy, the sufferings of their unwarrantable task masters, when neglect and contempt would, in such cases, deservedly be applied. She continued by the body of her husband until near midnight, when she retired to her chamber. It was the same which had been occupied by St. Anna, during her residence at the castle. She sunk upon her couch, and endeavoured to obtain a few hours repose. When she awoke, she found the night not far spent; the moon beams still glittered on the water, and a solemn silence reigned around the castle. She seated herself by the window, and, taking her lute, played a favourite little melancholy air, which her mother had taught her in the convent. When she had finished it, she observed the friar under the tower, listening with great attention to her lute; and, as he fixed his eyes steadfastly upon the window, she heard him say,

“ It was in that room I first beheld the beautiful and unfortunate St. Anna. What a dreadful gloom now seems to appear in every part of these solitary walks, once the delight of her ingenuous mind. Then it was, that I could boast the possession of a tranquil mind. And, long had I remained

master of that invaluable treasure, but for the powerful influence of a vicious passion. Can I meditate in the solitudes without a tear? Can I witness, amidst the deep serenity of the night, objects that were once the care of St. Anna, now wild and neglected, without the heartfelt pangs of horror? How often have I listened to that air, now played by her disconsolate child, with unwearied attention. That friendless unfortunate to be the wife of a villain, a murderer,—Oh, heavens!”

He burst into a flood of tears, and retired hastily down the avenue. Surprised at this singular speech, Florella rose from her seat, and paced up and down the chamber, wrapt, as it were, in the gloomy anticipation of impending misery. Her tears ceased to flow, and her eyes apparently, with the impulse of insanity, rolled wildly in her head. She stopped at intervals, and with deep sighs exclaimed—

“ Did he not mention the name of my mother? and with such emphasis and sorrow,—Merciful God! It is impossible. Yes, it must be the dream of a bewildered brain.”

The morning dawned. She saw the friar quit his melancholy haunt, and enter the castle—

“ Go,” said she, to her servant, “ go, and request the friar to attend me; if he knows my mother, he cannot refuse, in this distressing moment, to comfort and protect me.”

In a few minutes he entered the apartment, with his face buried in his cowl.

"Behold," she cried, "an innocent victim to treachery, sinking beneath the weight of her misfortunes. Behold her placed in a situation, scarcely credible, without a friend to whom she can apply for advice or consolation. Oh! that my dear affectionate mother could be informed of my situation! In her bosom should I find an asylum from the perils that surrounded me. Yes, St. Anna would protect and comfort me."

"St. Anna!" exclaimed the monk, as he threw back his cowl, wild with distress, "I am your protector, your father."

"My father! great God!" she started with violent emotion from her seat, and looked upon the pale and almost senseless friar, with marks of distrust and horror.

"Yes!" he continued, "before you stands the depraved, and guilty Jerome. forget those sacred ties by which we are connected, for I am unworthy of them, and look upon me only in the light of a friend."

Convulsive sighs burst from her heart, and, as he approached, to assist her, she swooned in his arms. When she recovered, fearful of being again the object of the friar's unnatural and licentious cruelties, she threw herself upon her knees before him.

"Your child requests you," she cried, "to respect the sacred obligations of a parent."

“ Ah! that fatal illusion wounds me to the very soul. My child!—before my God, do I swear to protect you with a father’s love!”

He pressed her to his bosom, and, for some time, mingled his tears with those of his unhappy and ill-fated daughter.

During the day he left her, to direct some necessary preparations respecting the interment of her husband’s body; but in the evening he visited her again, and continued with her until near midnight, when he retired to his chamber. Sleep fled his pillow; the agitation of his mind compelled him to seek comfort in devotion; and stealing softly from his room, he sought out, in the solitudes in the garden, a small oratory, dedicated, by the lady Asturas, to midnight prayer. He had often, during his residence in the family, indulged his meditation in this consecrated spot; and, as the piercing familiarity, with which every object struck him, brought back to his imagination that delightful period, when his mind, untutored in the vicious artifice of impure ideas, was the seat of unbounded happiness; he wandered to the grotto where he first seduced St. Anna, and, taking a pencil from his pocket, wrote a letter to her, expressive of his sorrowful contrition. Early in the morning he ordered the grave to be dug in the small chapel that belonged to the castle, and then retired, to console his beloved Florella. The procession commenced at midnight. The glaring of the

torches amongst the old forest trees bending to the wind, as they passed on to the grave; the solemn appearance of the bier, and the piercing sorrows of Florella, struck every one present with an awful sense of the ceremony. They had nearly reached the oratory, which was illuminated for the purpose, when several voices commanded them to stop, and rest the bier upon the ground. Confusion and terror were visible in their countenances; and ere they had time to question each other concerning the cause of this alarm, four men, habited in long cloaks, approached the bier, and, throwing aside the pall, forced open the coffin, stripped the body of its shroud, and, thrusting it into a large sack, uttered the following words:

“The Holy Inquisition is our authority for this act.”

All now was horror and distress. The friar, regardless of every other circumstance that claimed his attention, ran in search of his daughter, whom he found senseless on the ground, surrounded by the female part of the family. He took her in his arms, and fled with the greatest precipitation to the castle. On entering the hall, he found it filled with men, armed, and dressed in travelling habits. They readily gave him assistance, and entreated him to suffer them to call their master.

“Who has usurped,” cried the monk, “the dominion of this castle?”

At that moment, a tall man, in a rich dress, entered the hall, accompanied by a stranger of genteel appearance. He looked sternly at the monk, and questioned him concerning Florella, who had just recovered from her indisposition.

"She is the unfortunate wife of Gazala, the late possessor of this mansion," said he.

"Ah! is it possible, that so lovely a creature should be the wife of that abandoned villain, the murderer of my brother?"

"Brother!"

"Yes, reverend father, before you stands the brother of the ill-fated Marquis of Meridas. I have unexpectedly arrived in Spain, on being liberated from the Bastille, where I have been confined for many years for speaking contemptuously of an insignificant and worthless courtier. I hastened to congratulate my brother on his acquisitions; and as I stopped at a small inn, in the village of Briego, a man, whom I was positive I had seen before, accosted me by my name, and requested to be in private with me, for a few minutes. I consented; first promising not to interrupt him in his journey, in consequence of any thing he told me. He then related to me the horrid murder of my brother, and the situation of the villain who perpetrated the crime. I begged of him his name; but he refused to tell it. My servants watched him narrowly until midnight, when he suddenly disappeared. I returned to Madrid, and procured officers to seize the murderer, in order

that he might expiate his crime upon the scaffold—”

Florella burst into tears. She was conducted to her chamber, and left, attended by a female servant, to seek some refreshment from repose. In the evening she was visited by her father, who told her that Don Volio, the brother of the murdered marquis, who had come to take possession of the castle, sympathising with her in her distresses, had promised to send her in his carriage, under an escort of four faithful domestics to Madrid. Overjoyed at so unexpected, but pleasing an event, she begged that her journey might not be delayed, as the scenes around her served only to increase the melancholy reflection on her unhappy situation. The friar informed Don Volio of her request; and, early in the morning of the next day, the carriage was in readiness at the gate of the castle. After collecting her little store of valuables and books, she took an affectionate farewell of her father, who gave her a letter to the abbess, and, bidding Don Volio a polite adieu, departed, attended by a female servant, for the convent of St. Catherine in Madrid. Jerome continued watching the carriage, until it disappeared on the distant hills; when he set off for his convent, with a heart too sorrowful and oppressed, to be relieved by the gloomy scenes of a cloister. She arrived at the convent in perfect safety, and, after presenting the servants with a

gratuity for their care and attention, hurried through the cloisters to the parlour, and inquired for the abbess. St. Anna entered the apartment with a countenance full of joy.

“ My daughter,” said she, “ this unexpected visit is more than I should have thought of.”—

Florella burst into a flood of tears, and delivered the letter to her mother. She opened it with a trembling hand, and her undisguised horror, at seeing the signature of Jerome, compelled her to refrain, for a few minutes, reading the contents. They were as follow :

“ This letter, my beloved St. Anna, is written on the very spot where I first seduced your affections, under the sacred guise of friendship. Every idea of that crime is attended with an unconquerable degree of sorrow. Accident lately placed me in a situation, where the tender attention of a father became requisite for the salvation of our child. Ah, St. Anna! the beautiful Florella has been married to a villain. He proved to be the servant of the Marquis of Meridas, whom he murdered in Germany, and has, for some time, assumed the title of his master, and been in possession of his property. He deceived you with a letter, said to be written by the uncle of the marquis, but which he forged. He has treated the unhappy Florella with brutal and cruel severity. He now moulders with the dead in the prison of the In-

quiltion; and she is returned to claim the protection of, I hope, an indulgent and affectionate mother.

JEROME."

She felt the consciousness of her temerity, in hastening the celebration of a marriage, upon such trivial evidence of Gazala's title to the property of the Asturas' family, as the production of a few letters from Don John de Modena.

"Lament not," she exclaimed, as she pressed her daughter to her bosom, "your unfortunate situation. I own my indiscretion was great; but, to guard against guilt and insincerity, is beyond the ordinary powers of the human mind. I shall ever curse the hour when I resigned myself to the fatal influence of pride and credulity."

She paused, and, in a faltering tone, inquired of her daughter, to what convent Jerome was banished, and if she ever heard him mention her name?

"He is now residing," said she, "in a convent of White Penitents in Arragon, and I heard him call upon your name, and curse his perfidious conduct towards you, in the height of unfeigned distress."

"My God!" she cried, as she sunk into a chair, "what feelings are these—this unusual trembling?—My heart palpitates—A sudden coldness steals all over me—I am faint.—Assist me, Florella!—Oh! Jerome!"

It was some time before the abbess recovered; when she listened to a narration of her daughter's misfortunes, and, consider-

ing herself the sole cause of her distress, conjured her to forget her sorrows, and not to dwell upon the remembrance of an ill-fated villanous husband.

"He called on God," said she, "to witness the justness of his professions: and that God has now punished his impious temerity!"

St. Anna frequently wandered alone, amongst the romantic walks of the garden, at the close of the day, to indulge herself in the pleasing task of reflection; for the letter of Jerome revived the mournful remembrance of her love for him, and of interviews almost forgotten. As she perused it, she would frequently exclaim—

"Written on the very spot, where he first beguiled me with the fair form of friendship! Oh, merciful God! And yet my mind, ever active to resent that base and premeditated injury, cannot now resist the impulse of an unrequited and destructive passion."

The misfortunes of Abelard and Eloisa became her constant study; and those hours, once devoted to prayer, she spent in weeping over their mutual sufferings, with the tenderest feelings of sympathy. She now experienced the effect of an erroneous opinion, too frequently entertained by the sex, that the inexorable rigours of a monastic life can finally eradicate the natural sensibility of their nature; and that ill usage will compel them to forget, that they are fallible.—Vain and irrational ideas!—She concealed her sensations from the sister-

hood, and attended to the concerns of her holy family as usual; but at midnight, Eloisa could not repeat, with more emphasis than St. Anna,

Tears still are mine, and those I need not spare;
Love but demands what else were shed in prayer,
No happier task these faded eyes pursue;
To read, and weep, is all they now can do.

The vaulted aisles, and solitary avenues, were alone her chief resort in her leisure hours. Her fondness for Florella increased; and, instead of lamenting the villany of Gazala, she rejoiced in her return to the order: she inspired her with a love for religion, but checked, at the same time, the growing influence of enthusiasm. She particularly explained to her the origin of religious establishments; the means by which they acquired such fatal influence over mankind; the vicious intercourse carried on between the votaries of both sexes, under the mask of religion; and the real and meritorious designs of such institutions. Florella looked upon her situation in a light very different from the generality of the nuns. She justly considered the convent an asylum for the unfortunate, and not as the prison house of religious devotees. St. Anna too soon experienced those fatal effects, which flow from indulging the pleasing sorrows of returning love: she was seized with a fever; and the mind, unable to free itself from the task of supporting in sickness the heavy load of affliction, yielded to its influence, and she became delirious. After some

weeks had elapsed, the abbess recovered; and, looking back upon her past conduct with a degree of shame, blushed at the remembrance of her weakness, and endeavoured, although in vain, to recover her wonted character. One evening, as she wandered for the air with Florella in the garden, a letter was brought to her by a sister:—she stopped, and, looking wildly at her daughter, hurried her along with her to the cell. She there, on opening the fatal letter, swooned on her mattress. Florella, struck with horror at the circumstance, examined the letter, and found it came from Jerome.

The friar reached his convent during the night, and throwing himself, as he entered his cell, upon his couch, gave himself up to the horrors of his conscience. He had privately studied the religious principles of Luther; and that zealous protestant, being then well known in Italy, Jerome, after signing a violent abjuration of his catholic opinions, fled from the sect in the night, and bent his way towards the confines of France. During his journey, he publicly preached in fields and solitudes the doctrines of Luther; and, having gained a few illiterate followers, he commanded them to sign a recantation of their catholic principles. The news, however, spread abroad; and, ere he had reached the foot of the Pyrennees, the familiars of the Inquisition overtook him, and, seizing him and his partizans, carried them to the dungeons of that fatal prison. He was instantly recognised

with astonishment by Don Medilla de Grado. As he questioned him with haughty severity, respecting his conduct, the friar proudly exclaimed—

“ I am a murderer! And, when I look back upon the errors of my life, my imagination pictures to me the dreadful punishment that awaits the guilty; and yet have I received from the hand of an holy and religious friar, the consolatory administration of absolution for all my past crimes! He told me to rely upon the faith of his religious benedictions for the salvation of my perjured soul; and yet am I still the prey of tormenting reflections. Is it possible for me to believe that a monk can eradicate, or even protract, the miseries resulting from iniquity? Can he wash out, with consecrated water, the remembrance of those bloody and cruel transactions, which I sanctioned and committed, under the mask of this Holy Creed? De Carros and Bissare moulder in their unhallowed graves. Oh God! they died unjustly! Can I forget, that these hands for ever will appear steeped in their blood? Can I forget my despicable treatment to St. Anna and Florella? Can the precepts of that religion, which authorises its votaries to pursue the system of persecution, and indulge themselves with lawless and cruel decrees against Innocence and Virtue, assist the serious meditations of a mind labouring under the horrors of a guilty conscience? Oh, no! I have been made a villain by my religion, but cannot find

in it the virtuous excellence of oblivion. From this hour I abjure the Creed of our most holy catholic faith—and, through the mediation of our blessed Saviour, implore the mercy of an insulted, but all-forgiving God. The sacred law requires that blood should be the price of blood; and, whether spilt by the executioner or the criminal, will, I hope, if it is possible to be credited, expiate the crime that demands such a dreadful punishment. It is but momentary; my mind is made up to it: prepare your racks and flames; I fear them not: for I die a martyr to the most abandoned and blasphemous Creed of the catholic faith."

It is impossible to conceive the astonishment this speech created in the minds of the Inquisitors. Jerome, late one of their confederates, convicted of heresy, called forth their severest indignation. He was instantly condemned to die by fire.

On hearing his sentence—

"Exult, imprisoned soul!" he cried, as they dragged him to his dungeon, "in the triumph thou hast completed."

It was there, that he wrote the letter to St. Anna, which contained the following words:

"You will, my beloved St. Anna! no doubt hear with surprise, that I am now under sentence of death in this damnable Inquisition. I have abandoned the precepts of my religion, and glory in the act: for I have found more essential comfort in the

doctrines of Luther, than in midnight prayer, and hypocritical sanctity. My crimes are great; but, I trust I shall be forgiven. Was I conscious that you would shed one tear for the fate of him, who has ever lamented his barbarous conduct towards you, with severe and unfeigned contrition, death would be embraced with tenfold felicity. To morrow I am to meet my fate at the stake; the hour is eight in the evening. When you see the clouds of smoke ascend, the soul of Jerome will be wafted to the throne of heaven; and there only, will it shudder at the sentence of the eternal JUDGE. I tremble not at the torments I am about to suffer, but exult in my recantation. Adieu, my St. Anna!—adieu, my beloved Florella!—My daughter—think of me when I am no more; and forget, in the remembrance of my sufferings, those detested crimes which were the bane of my existence. Adieu, farewell for ever!

JEROME."

When St. Anna recovered from her indisposition, she read the letter as one in distraction.

"At eight," she exclaimed, "he quits this world for ever!"

Tears burst from her eyes, as she looked with horror towards the towers of the Inquisition; and absorbed, as it were, in grief, the time passed unnoticed, until the fatal hour; when, accidentally turning her eyes to heaven, she saw large columns of smoke ascend, and roll horribly, amidst

the coming gloom of night, to the sky. She immediately quitted her cell, and ran, shrieking with distress, to a solitude in the garden, where Florella and some of the sisters found her stretched lifeless on the ground. They bore her back to the convent, and, with the greatest difficulty, restored her to her senses. She sat at her window during the night, with her swollen eyes turned towards the prison; and as, at intervals, the sparks floated in the air, when the ashes were removed, she shed a thousand tears in the anguish of her soul, and, from that moment, vowed to immure herself no longer in the gloomy ways of a monastery. She looked upon the emblems of idolatry, which surrounded her, with an eye of horror; and, as she mused alone upon her misfortunes in solitude, she wrote the following lines:

REFLECTIONS IN SOLITUDE.

YE time-worn domes, all hallow'd and divine,
Where rays of glory on the virtuous shine;
When dire misfortune, in my early years,
Doom'd me to constant misery and tears;
I then, impassion'd, sought your blest abode,
And gave my life a sacrifice to God.
But now, when summon'd by the taper's light,
To waste in penitence the hours of night,
Or hear the death bell tolling, sad and slow,
The solemn anthem, and the voice of woe;
No more my mind with bigotry adores
These dusky emblems of immortal pow'rs;
Nor Superstition's holy law reveres
But mourns its frailty, with unceasing tears.
My breaking heart now prompts me to declare,
Tis love that guides it from the ways of pray'r;

And shuns with horror these prophetic glooms,
 Dim walks of death, begirt with mould'ring tombs.
 For here pale Melancholy oft retires,
 And youth, enslav'd, in pious dreams expires;
 Here beauty blooms, unseen, in dreary shades,
 Haunts, that no footstep from the world invades;
 And wretched orphans, with injustice driv'n,
 To seek for comfort in the thoughts of heav'n,
 Droop o'er their ills, and silently complain,
 Bewildered victims of the troubled brain.
 Say, can the organ's soul-inspiring tones,
 Cold marble statues, deck'd with human bones,
 Lone midnight watchings, veils, or friars grave,
 Heal the deep wound, that first Affection gave?
 Oh, no! Each awful rite may serve to move
 The soul to piety. The heart to love
 Will ever yield a fond endearing slave,
 Till sorrow sinks the victim to the grave.
 When last I witness'd, in the face of heav'n,
 A beauteous sister to oblivion giv'n,
 Methought I heard, beside the sacred shrine,
 Some angel whisper, with a voice divine—
 ' Fly, fly the curse! thy God will ne'er require
 ' The soul's repentance in eternal fire,
 ' For one transgression, one unholy deed,
 ' By reason sanction'd, and by love decreed.
 ' And though no father, husband, brother, friend,
 ' With deep-felt grief thy funeral rites attend—
 ' Nor yonder aisle, which glim'ring lamps illumine,
 ' Indulge thy ashes with a sculptur'd tomb—
 ' When the pale moon-beam sheds its trembling light,
 ' And Contemplation hails the placid night—
 ' Beside thy moss-grown grave, in lonely dell,
 ' Shall sorrowing sisters in devotion dwell;
 ' And mourn beneath the glitt'ring willow's shade,
 ' That hides th' unhallow'd spot where thou art laid,
 ' Their kindred suff'rings; as to distant skies,
 ' Attendant spirits waft their plaintive sighs;
 ' And, in their airy course, aloud proclaim,
 ' Thro' heaven's wide way, thy consecrated name.'

The sisters had now learned the cause of her distress; and, fearful her conduct might endanger the moral habits of her sect, or eradicate their love for solitude and celibacy, she determined upon quitting the convent, and retiring into Switzerland.—Her unconquerable affection for Jerome, also required such a step; for the scenes around her, only served to heighten the severity of melancholy reflection.

Every thing being prepared, St. Anna, attended by the weeping sisterhood, quitted the monastery at midnight, and, accompanied by her daughter, travelled with the greatest dispatch until she reached Lausanne.

It was in a small romantic village near that town, where she fixed her residence. Their cottage was situated at the foot of a mountain, covered with the most beautiful shrubs, where she erected an altar, sacred to the loves of Abelard and Eloisa, and, in remembrance of her own misfortunes, found, that love, once known, can never be forgotten. Her attention to the inhabitants soon endeared her to them all; and Florella attracted the notice of the curate, a man not in years, but a protestant, and of a turn of mind peculiarly adapted to that of St. Anna. She encouraged his visits, by becoming his pupil in religious sentiments, and, in a little time, succeeded in uniting him to her daughter. To the decline of life their days were spent in innocent and uninterrupted pleasure; and St. Anna, in the contemplation of Florella's happiness, regretted not

the frailty of her nature in youth, nor the indiscreet consummation of her daughter's marriage with Gazala.

CHAPTER XII.

" YE valleys low, where the mild whispers use,
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the Swart star sparsely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enamel'd eyes;
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
With cowslips wan, that hang their pensive head,
And flourets, of a thousand hues,
To strew the laureat hearse, where Lycid lies."

MILTON.

AT the end of the second day's journey, the travellers stopt at a cottage, by the road side, and inquired the nearest way to the chateau de Brun.

The peasant directed them up a long and beautiful valley, at the end of which Don Alphonso discovered the garden wall of his villa. Some servants were waiting his approach, and on their arrival at the gate, ushered the party into the house, where a repast was set before them, in a parlour ornamented with descriptive figures, worked in tapestry, from the ballads of the most pleasing poets. The house was situated on the top of an eminence, that commanded an extensive prospect over the surrounding country, which was beautifully diversified with wood, water, and mountain scenery. Cleanthe would often wander by moonlight with Angelo, amongst the neighbouring romantic wilds, to muse upon the pic-

turesque and sublime scenes with which they abounded; and, when the evening bird sung sweet in the deepest solitude of the grove, to relieve her mind from melancholy reflections, she turned her thoughts to the study of poetry——An amusement, which never fails in producing its effect; whether written under the pressure of sorrow, or in the sweet delirium of love. In a part of the ruins she wrote the following lines:

PERCHANCE 'tis here, that poor Misfortune's
child,

Some beauteous vestal, Love's devoted slave,
The ling'ring hours in penitence beguil'd,
Or, hopeless, found a refuge in the grave.
For, as I pace this mould'ring ruin round,
Enliven'd only by the wild flow'r's bloom,
Methinks an hollow and prophetic sound
Comes, awful, from some hapless mourner's tomb —
Again it whispers, " With unhallow'd tread
" Wake not the sacred slumbers of the dead."
Spirit,—if such thou art,—I come not here,
With steps profane, at twilight, to invade
Thy solemn sanctuary, or sainted tow'r;
But wander, at this dark and pleasing hour,
In silent solitude's deserted shade,
To mourn a fate, distracting and severe—
To ease a heart, with misery oppress'd,
By fortune sorrow'd, and by love distress'd.

One evening, as she was taking her accustomed walk in the solitude, a Spanish soldier, apparently worn out with fatigue, and in great distress, inquired the nearest way to the chateau de Brun—

" Yon pathway," said Cleantie, " leads directly to the house;" and passed on.

As she returned, Angelo met her in the

valley. He took her affectionately by the hand, and proceeded some way by her side, ere he spoke.

“Cleanthe,” said he, “when we survey the world, with the eyes of compassion and philanthropy, misfortune should not eradicate that sense of gratitude we owe to our Maker, for not placing us in a situation worse than that which we enjoy. If the calamities of this life are such as might force from us the severest reflections, we should recollect, that it is but a pilgrimage to those realms of happiness, where the tear is wiped away, and affliction ceases—”

Cleanthe grasped his hand, and begged him to be brief.

“My mind,” said she, “is steeled against the impressions of misfortune, and my heart has almost forgotten its natural sensibility. Your speech, Angelo, seems to be the prelude to some recent calamity; tell me the worst:—what am I to expect?”

“Your brother, Jacques,” said he, as he burst into tears, “is dead. Your mother, afflicted at the unexpected news, fell senseless from her chair; and, in the act of raising her from the ground, Alphonso perceived some marks of blood upon the floor. Upon a minute examination, he found that she had received a dreadful contusion in the back part of her head from the fall. She now lies dangerously ill, and desires to see you.”

Cleanthe raised her eyes to heaven, and addressed herself to the deity—

“ If it is thy will, O Lord! that I should go down in sorrow to the grave; no murmuring shall mark me for thy displeasure. My tears, shall be the sacrifices of my heart, upon the altars of piety and resignation. Oh! Angelo, were it possible for me to believe there is an unequal distribution of happiness in this life, I should instance myself as a victim to the Almighty's unmerited wrath—”

She rested upon his arm, and they proceeded, silent and in tears, to the villa.

On her entering the parlour she was met by her father—

“ My Cleanthe!” he exclaimed, as he burst into tears, and buried his face in her bosom—“ You will soon be left without a mother!—without a friend, but your disconsolate father. Your brother is no more. His death is confirmed by Bertram, who personates the Spanish soldier, and who saw him committed to the grave.”

“ Bertram!” she shrieked—“ Merciful God!—where am I?—Oh, heavens! my long lost love.—But, my mother!”

She sunk into a chair, and remained for some time with her eyes fixed on the ground, as if in a state of insensibility: but grief, when it has gained the mastery of the heart, cannot long be concealed; it will either waste itself in floods of tears, or prey upon the mind in melancholy silence. Although her beloved Bertram, whom she had so long been separated from, was by her side, she continued to gaze upon her father with the

wildest look of horror, till summoned to her mother's chamber.—As she entered the apartment, her steps trembled, and an involuntary dread had nearly deprived her of her senses. Supported by her father, she reached the bed side; but when the curtains were drawn back, and she discovered her mother, pale and emaciated—when her eyes glanced upon her dearest friend, and observed the livid languor of death spreading itself over her countenance—when she saw the tear steal down her cheek, as she stretched forth her hand to Cleanthe, with paternal fondness, she sunk senseless into her father's arms, and for some hours remained in the most violent and distressing convulsions. On her recovery she desired to see her mother—but Clarinda was no more—she had died during the illness of her daughter.

When this awful circumstance was communicated to her, she rushed into the chamber, and, throwing herself upon the body, bathed it with floods of tears.

“Cruel Providence!” she exclaimed, “why was it ordained, that I should be the sport of unceasing misery? What have I done, to deserve these unparallled calamities?”

She paused, and, after gazing wildly upon the corpse for some minutes, addressed herself in fervent prayer to heaven.

About the hour of midnight, Bertram, with the domestics who were watching the body, persuaded her to retire to rest; and,

as they were leading her from the bed side; her father entered the room, pale and breathless. He spoke not to any one, but, hurrying to the body, kissed it, with seeming impassioned pleasure.

"My father!" said Cleanthe.

"My daughter!"

A burst of sorrow ensued.

"I have in my dreams suffered beyond description. I thought your mother came to me, as I reposed upon a verdant bank near the ruins where we found Don Angelo, and warned me, in a voice of sweetest melody, to prepare for death. I rose to clasp her in my arms, but she vanished.—The striking of the convent clock roused me from slumber. I fled hither, not knowing where I went,——What, if these dreadful images, that float upon the brain, should be realized? What, if you should be left, an orphan, in a world of villany, exposed to unfeeling censure and contempt?"

"Oh God!" she exclaimed, "talk not of such distracting events;—let me persuade you to retire to rest. I will do the same. Sleep will be of service to us both."

He embraced her affectionately, and parted with her at his chamber door.

For many days did the miserable Cleanthe visit the chamber, and weep over the body of her beloved mother; and, when laid in the coffin, she dressed it with the sweetest flowers that grew in the solitary wild near the villa.

The evening at length arrived, when the

disconsolate husband and Cleanthe, were to follow her mother to the grave. She was buried, at her own desire, in a solitude of the neighbouring convent garden, at the hour of midnight.

When the procession reached the gate, a funeral bell was tolling, and the brotherhood waiting in the court-yard to receive it. Some carried in their hands a cross or lighted taper, some strewed fresh blown flowers upon the ground, whilst a select party ranged themselves on each side the coffin, and sung a melancholy dirge. The following lines were engraved upon a tablet and fixed over her grave ;

Stranger! beneath this dewy mould,
Where early flowers their buds unfold,
A mother's ashes rest :
With no unholy passion tear
The tributes of the vernal year,
With which the turf is drest.
But here, at eve, in lonely wild,
With mute Affection's sorrowing child,
Her sacred virtues mourn ;
Or, 'neath yon ancient hallow'd yew,
With sympathetic tears bedew
The moss grown, mould'ring urn.

It was Don Angelo's intention, at some favourable period, to visit the remains of his wife, in the sepulchre amongst the ruins. He chose this opportunity of completing his desire, and proposed that Don Alphonso should accompany him.

" It will in some measure," said he, " relieve your mind from those melancholy reflections, which every day force you into solitude, to weep over the memory of the

lost Cleanthe. Your grief will continue its severity, whilst you remain here; for if you only wander in the garden, the drooping flowers that were planted by her hand, call forth your compassionate protection. You gaze upon them in tears. You leave them with regret. By travelling, the mind will be relieved; for, after having visited the ruins, we will proceed to the Pyrennees."

"I never can forget her," said Alphonso, as he clasped his hands together, with pious resignation: "for, if I shed not my tears at her tomb, or in the solitudes of these beloved scenes, where we once roved together, climate and variety cannot root out the sweets of reflection.—I call them sweets, Angelo; for there is a secret pleasure in distress, which no one but those who have felt it can imagine. But I will accompany you."

Previous to the departure of Angelo and Alphonso, Bertram was, by the advice and with the approbation of both parties, married to his Cleanthe; who, anxious to know the subsequent adventures that befel him when Roderigo tore them asunder in the castle, requested he would relate them. They were as follow—

"After that fatal night," said he, "in which we were betrayed to Roderigo by Dorinda, my mind became the seat of melancholy and despair; for concluding that the villain had stabbed you, I felt a degree of contempt for my existence, that almost bordered upon insanity. We travelled all

night at a round gallop; and, when the morning broke, I found, by the conversations of my guides, that we were pursuing the high road to France. We stopped for refreshment at the sign of the Golden Eagle, in a small village at the foot of the Pyrennees, and there I opened the note which was thrown into my prison by Gordez. The purport of it was this;

‘The two men, who are to conduct you on your journey, are ignorant of the roads. As soon as the party leave them, make the best of your time, and try to escape by stratagem.’

“Although the note did not convey that intelligence which I expected, I fully understood its meaning, and accordingly, when we had crossed the Pyrennees, and the party quitted company with my two conductors, I took an opportunity, by artful questions, to learn whether they were, or were not, at all acquainted with the route intended to be pursued. They disclaimed all ideas of ignorance, pretending, at the same time, a perfect knowledge of the French roads, and bye ways of the country; but I discovered, by certain whisperings and manoeuvres, that they intended to hire a guide at the next village. This gave me great satisfaction. I flattered myself that I might, from the few valuables left in my possession, gain him over to my interest, and, by that means, make my escape. We arrived at a lone house on some mountains, about sunset; and it was there that the intended guide was hired; but the agreement was so secret,

that I knew nothing of the matter, until we were about to depart on our journey. The night was very severe; and, although we travelled at a great rate, and my conductors well sheltered from the weather, they grumbled terribly at their occupation. In about an hour after we had quitted the inn, we entered upon a wild and desolate heath. The wind howled mournfully along the waste; and, ere we had proceeded a quarter of a mile, one of my attendants fell very ill. We instantly halted, and, dismounting, laid the poor fellow, half expiring, upon the ground. I then, by his conversation, found our guide to be an old Swiss ostler, apparently full of conceit and hypocrisy."

'There is a house,' he cried, 'at a little distance from hence; let me step there for some assistance; the man will die else.'

"The ruffian instantly consented.—I feigned great sorrow on account of the sickness of his companion, and pretended to assist him; but as he stood over the body, apparently in terrible agitation, I contrived to slip into the pathway our guide was pursuing, and fled after him with the greatest precipitation. I was enabled to follow him by the reflection of his light and the sound of his horse's feet, and continued so close to him, that I could not lose him easily. A light at length darted through a clump of low trees, and, perceiving the old guide quickening the pace of the animal, I exerted myself in proportion. When he alighted at the door of the hut,

he rapped loud, and requested admittance. An old man opened the window, and, after hearing his tale, readily gave credit to his report, and joined him with a lantern and some cordials. No sooner were they out of hearing, than I ventured to rap at the door. An old woman appeared at the window, and inquired who I was, and my business. I told her that I was a bewildered traveller, and begged to know my nearest way to the next village. She gave me a perplexed description of the pathway I was to pursue; but, urged by the terrible idea of again falling into the hands of my conductors, I trusted to my fate, and crossed the dreadful wild in the line she pointed out.—As the morning broke over the hills, I discovered the village spire, and, hastening my steps, gained its entrance before any of the inhabitants were stirring, save a smuggling industrious pawn-broker.—To avoid suspicion, I entered his shop, and exchanged the clothes on my back for a soldier's jacket and trowsers; and, having purchased my accoutrements of him, jogged on merrily to a small passado in the centre of the town, where I stopped for refreshment—I had not been in the kitchen long, before a servant came to me and said, that as I was a Spanish soldier, a gentleman who was dying in the house, would be glad to see me. A sudden coldness spread all over me: I thought the villains had discovered me, and took that me-

thod to entrap me ; but, resolving upon a scuffle before I surrendered, I fixed the bayonet on my musket, and followed the servant to the sick man's chamber. When I approached near the bed, the curtains were drawn back, and my astonishment is incredible, when I beheld your brother Jacques in the arms of death. I desired the servant instantly to quit the room, and made myself known to him. He appeared extremely surprised ; but the tear that rolled down his cheek, as he grasped me by the hand, convinced me how happy he felt himself in having a friend by him in his last moments. I inquired how he came in France ; but he was too weak to tell me. He requested pen, ink, and paper ; they were brought him, and he wrote, almost unintelligibly, that I should find you at the chateau de Brun in Arragon ; to go immediately, and report his death ; to take every thing he possessed, and see him properly buried. In about an hour after he had done this, he took me by the hand, and, turning himself upon his pillow, expired without a groan. I inquired of the physician who attended him, if he knew any thing concerning him, but could gain no information from any person respecting the mysterious business. At the end of three days, I saw poor Jacques carried to the grave, and, after paying the expences he had incurred at the inn, set out for Arragon. I travelled comfortably and uninterrupted, until I arrived in Spain ; when, stopping at an inn, to take some refreshment, I saw my

conductors saddling their horses in the yard; although it was impossible for them to discover who I was, yet the very knowledge I had of myself caused me to think I looked suspicious, and I trembled every step I took, until I had got many miles beyond the village. From that time I happened with no other circumstance of consequence, but arrived safe in the kingdom of Arragon. I there enquired for the chateau de Brun, and, being directed the nearest way to it by the peasants, found, as I desired, a reward which sufficiently compensates me for all my troubles and misfortunes."

The families of Bertram and Alexo lived in strict friendship; and, as they had suffered together in misfortunes, they now shared the blessing of peace and affluence; whilst Angelo and Alphonso fixed their residence at the foot of the Pyrennees, in a solitary village, for the purpose of meditation and reflection—

"For the energy, necessary to the performance of great actions, elevation of character, and stability and firmness in virtue, is no where so easily acquired as in solitude, and never so efficacious as by religion."